

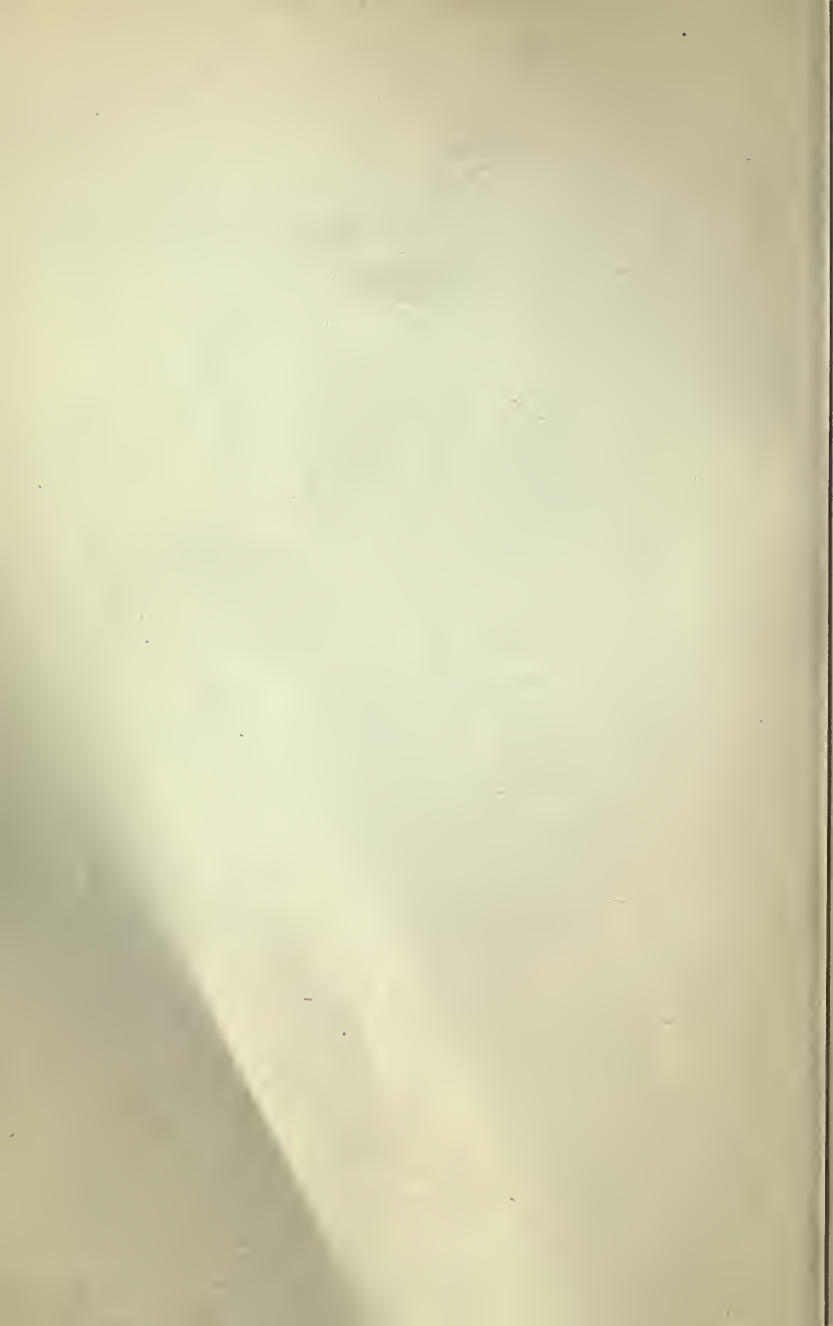
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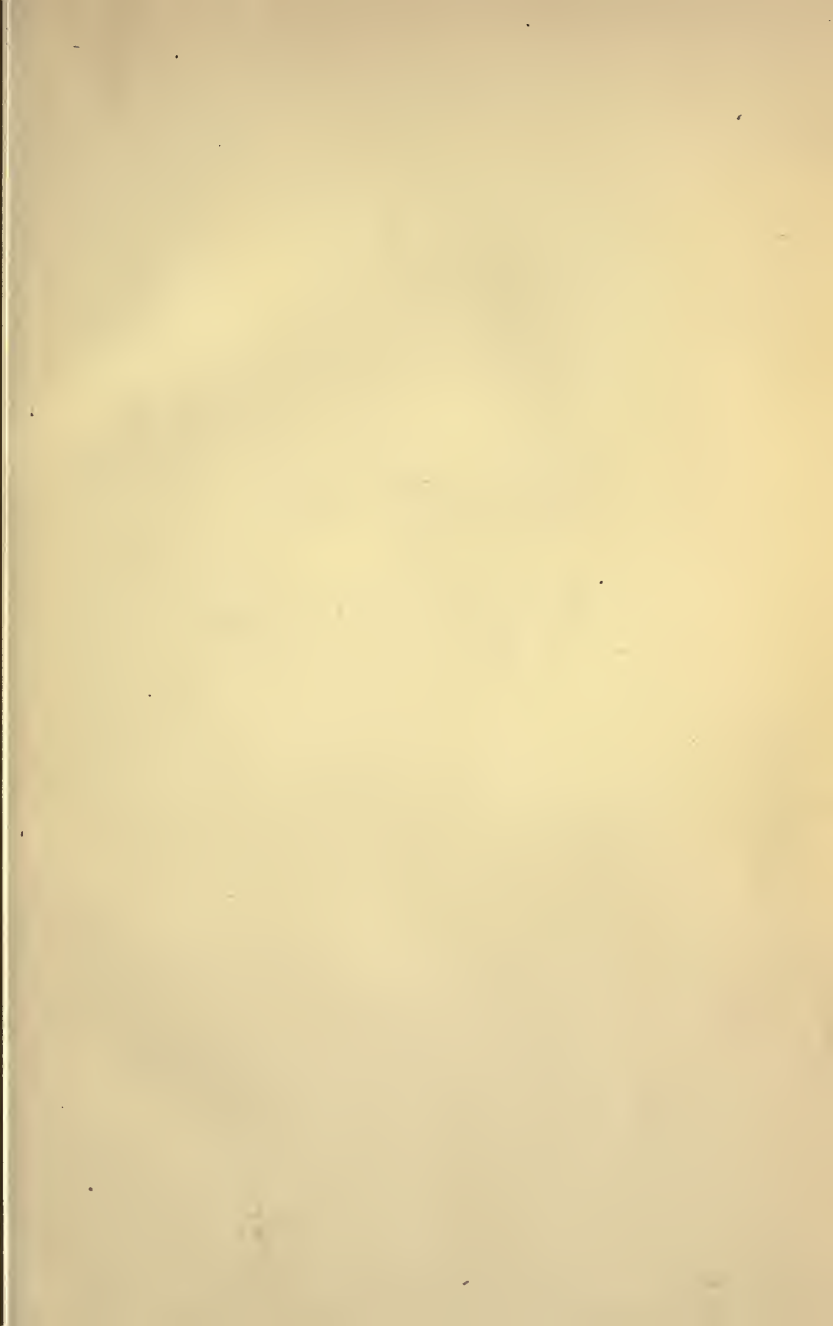
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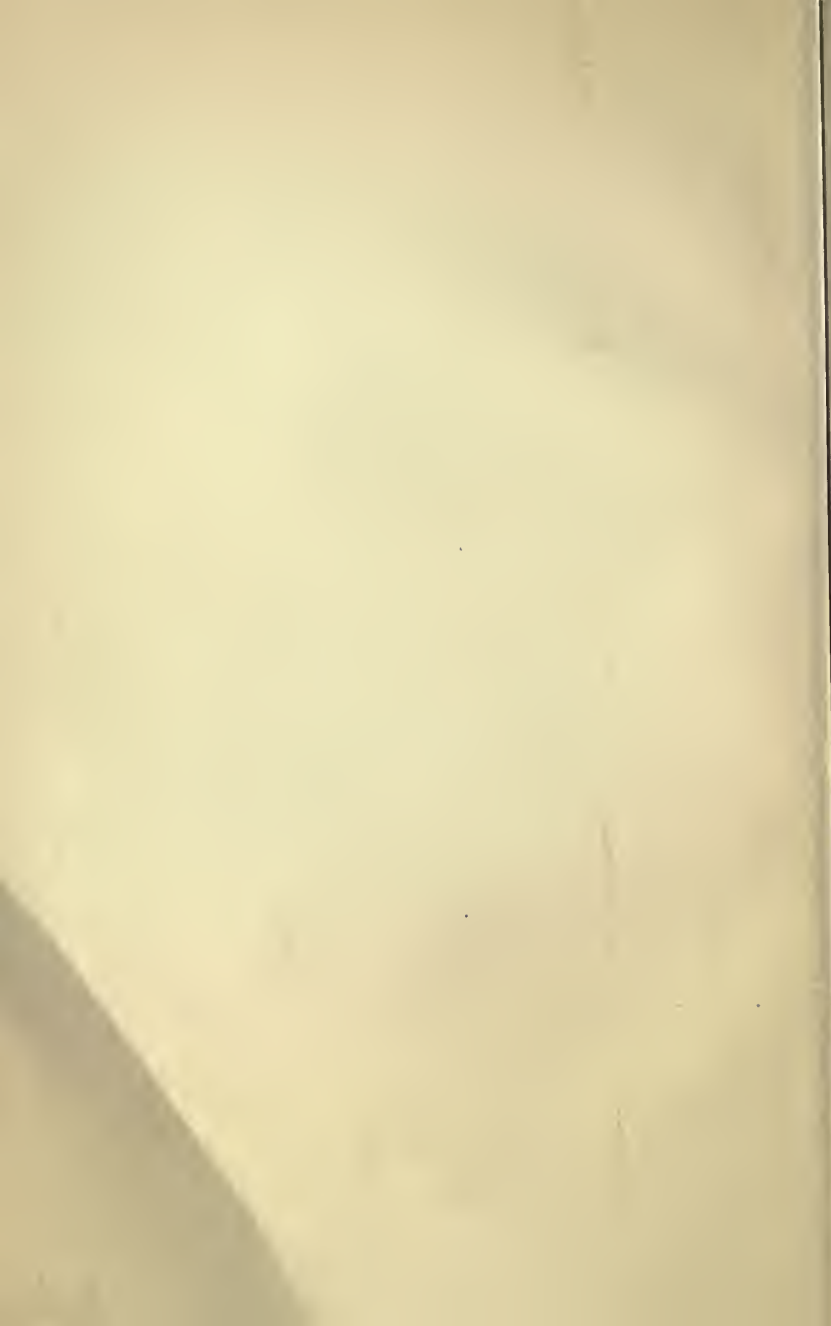












RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
EMINENT MEN

## AMERICAN LITERATURE,

And Other Papers.

BY EDWIN PERCY WHIPPLE.

With Introduction by JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER,  
to whom the volume is dedicated.

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J. A. Wilson. Sc.

*E. P. Whipple*

RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
EMINENT MEN

With Other Papers

BY

EDWIN PERCY WHIPPLE

WITH INTRODUCTION BY REV. C. A. BARTOL, D.D.



BOSTON  
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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE writer of these now collected celebrations of literary, political, scientific, and philanthropic genius has added his own name to the number of the dead, and his own writings thereby become posthumous. As the peer of the subjects of his pen, he would deserve a portrait from the hand of an artist equal to himself in depicting character, could such an one be found. Had he, like Rubens and Hunt and other painters, sat to himself, what a likeness, in manuscript, from his self-knowledge and curious skill we might have had, but that his singular lowliness would hide the equally rare splendor of his gifts! A remarkable unconsciousness of his own superiority always made others' estimate of him a sort of shame and surprise to his own mind; and so, in appraising his peculiar faculties, he would for once have fallen below the mark. To use Jeremy Taylor's figure, he was like the candle casting about it a shadow and a cloud, and shining to all but himself.

He had the original and intrinsic talent that bursts forth like a flame, or boils up as a spring, making its way through hindrances and feeding on what obstructs. His was one of the conspicuous cases in our community of spontaneous intellectual generation, his early opportunities of culture being scanty and few.

It has been thought that a not quite unfit preface to this volume may be found in what was said, by one who lacked not occasion to know him, at his public funeral in the church where it had been his wont to worship: —

A week ago yesterday <sup>1</sup> it was announced here to the congregation then assembled within these walls, that the church building for the present would be closed. But its doors have been opened by an angel, — the angel of Death. As the prison of Paul and Silas was shaken by an earthquake and they were set free, so from this confinement of mortality a soul emulous of all such nobility as theirs has been as suddenly released. As unworldly man of the world, stepping thus for a moment from our sight, our friend — my friend — would not like this public notice of his career or departure. To be celebrated in any way was not at

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Whipple died at his home on the 16th of June, 1886. He was born in Gloucester the 8th of March, 1819. After a private service, on the Monday following his decease, at the house, there was a public funeral at the West Church, Boston.

all to his taste. Like Channing, he valued only what fault could be found with him. Never has the community been addressed and instructed by a man in his temper more retiring and in his habit more retired. To no author has the home-life been a larger element, more happy, satisfying, serene, and complete. He nestled like a timid bird in his home, among his kindred and companions, with his books, his children, and his mate. He declined being of set purpose seen and shown. He waived notice, and was a little resentful at being admired. A compliment could not be got into his incredulous ear; he would instantly change the subject. As the red-breast shyly builds the covert for her young in a crevice amid the leaves, his affections were hidden and unprofessed. To superficial observers he might thus seem even cold.

But the eulogy which great worth does not covet we cannot withhold: it is not right or good we should; and we have this sad advantage over him now, that he can no longer remonstrate against our honest praise. We are irresistibly moved to commemorate a man than whom none speaking and writing the English tongue has done more in our generation to keep the genius and virtue of others fresh in our recollection and bright before our eyes. How he preserved for us all their excellent qualities, restored their portraits, retouched the perhaps fading tints, challenged attention to undervalued traits, displayed and unrolled neglected

beauty, piously wiped away the dust of oblivion, — like Walter Scott's reverent covenanter among the tombs, rechiselled the mossy, worn, dim inscriptions, and deepened the images time could not efface!

Mr. Whipple was an intellectual sympathy incarnate. He lived to do honor to others, and to forget himself in awarding to everybody else the meed of desert. No dramatic poet, novelist, painter of likenesses on the canvas could be in his subjects and sitters more absorbed, himself unconscious of having any claim or winning a morsel of regard. Death itself, in its approaches to him, seems to have respected this blessed devotion, this privacy so intense, this humility — as Monckton Milnes wrote — so joyful and dear.

For some years his health had been failing and infirmity on the increase. But he was not a man to tell, or let us suspect, his troubles. He would communicate only gladness and good cheer; he kept his pain or sorrow to himself. At the decease of a beloved daughter, he simply said to me, "It is untalkable." He was meek and lowly like his Master, and the almost more than a woman's delicacy in his robust and manly mind was a sort of continual hint of the Holy Spirit. A strong thinker in a slender frame, he had also the sensibility which is not unveiled, and the sentiment which cannot be sentimental or weak. Nobody would enter a more displeased protest against whoever would set

him forth as a model of perfection, in any way. He would not say, with Oliver Cromwell, "Paint me as I am." He would rather, in the spirit of Shakspeare's beautiful sonnet, deprecate any exhibition of mourning remembrance after the tolling of the sullen bell, and beg not to be painted at all.

This rarely modest disposition was well suited in the custom of his plain and quiet demeanor, in his withdrawal from appearing abroad as his bodily strength abated, and in the peculiarly placid circumstances of his lamented yet cheerful demise. But diminution of his never gigantic frame of flesh was attended with no loss of interior faculty. His analytic power was as searching, his observation as keen, his memory had the same amplitude and grip at the last as at the first. In many recent conversations with him under the roof or by the way, I was unable to perceive in him any intellectual loss. But the ties were unambiguously loosening that bound him to this life. Like the aeronaut, he was very evidently getting ready to go up. Cord after cord is cut; the silken vessel swells with the buoyant element penned in; it sways and flutters to and fro with the passing breeze. At length the only remaining thread is severed that detains it from the sky, and it soars out of view, and we linger at the rising like those men of Galilee gazing up after that other ascension into heaven.



I do not desire to expose myself to my lifelong friend's rebuke, reaching me though he be dead, by describing him as devoid of any human limitation or fault. But I cannot, through my tears, in my beloved see errors when their virtues stand in the way; and his virtues were so great, that all else was but as the chaff the wind blows away as the flail threshes it from the wheat in the autumn field or on the granary floor; or like an eclipse of the moon, which the sun makes by casting the earth's shadow from his own wondrous blaze.

He had an eminent magnanimity. Did others crowd and push in the grasp for riches or race for fame?—he stood aside, he fell back, he relinquished to those who craved it the prize. I never heard a word of envy from his lips; I never saw a spark of malice in his eye. He rejoiced in his comrade's superiority and success. He was just to those who were unjust to him. He was, in the language of the hymn,—

“Content and pleased to live unknown.”

Yet as Othello said, “I must be found,” and as the great Cæsar, despite hesitation and warning on “the Ides of March,” had to go forth and be seen, so all men according to their ability must work with their fellows, to be measured and weighed. While, like foresters with their tape-lines at the mighty oaks



and elms and pines, many of Mr. Whipple's associates in the Guild of Letters are putting their estimates of him in print, my reckoning will be superfluous but for my own need from an intimate acquaintance and as a duty of office over his coffin to set my witness down. Let me, then, in addition to the mention of his freedom from all that is mean or false, note his function as a scholar in the realm of knowledge, and how he fared in that true prosperity whose conditions he expounded to stimulate so many a younger student's ambition and ennoble his aims.

Mr. Whipple will be remembered mainly in his function as a critic in the commentary of the coming age. How well he personally illustrated and valued the criticism whose uses he so highly esteemed, and whose business he was one of the first fairly to institute in the land! In art, of the literary or any other kind, a standard of criticism scarce existed in this country fifty years ago. Even now, in every department of intelligence, how crude we are in our opinions and biassed in our decisions! How kissing goes by favor in many of the articles admitted for publication in newspapers and magazines; and how Barabbas is preferred to Jesus every day!

Said James T. Fields to me: "I could double the merit of the articles in the 'Atlantic Monthly' and halve my subscription list at the same time."

In a similar vein of ridicule of the prostitution of journalism to popularity, he wittily laid it down as an obligation in his craft to "pander to the good taste of the public," as Mr. Whipple laughed at what was sour and presuming in authorship, when he talked of "men of wit and displeasure about town." I do not overlook such writers as George Ripley in the "New York Tribune" and many a name of fine repute among the living or the dead. I am not unmindful of them when, not quarrelling with the diverse sincere conclusions in which these guagers of books are variously guaged, I pronounce Edwin P. Whipple the best critic and creator of criticism America has produced. Let me enumerate, briefly in order, some of the marks of excellence on this sort of judicial bench.

1. The critic's first qualification for his part is what Paul calls "the discerning of spirits" among the gifts in the early Church. Mr. Whipple found the honey in the carcass; he sucked the marrow from the bones. He had a profound, unerring penetration of an author's meaning, and survey of his scope. Nothing in the contents of a volume could escape that eye so quick and large, so sharp and tender, so clear, yet not dry or malign. He understood every purpose, saw the precise direction, and tasted in the disquisition or poem each particular word. He carried his infallible divination of character, in its forms

in the living book of society, into his inspection and reading of the transcript made by the pen. Seldom, if ever, did he understate or overdraw.

2. He was so apt at distinctions that he could draw the line between his own body and soul. His weapon was too much for its scabbard ; he was all sword and no sheath. He was able to reconstruct a literary composer from a sentence, as Agassiz — his appreciative friend, near whose ashes his will lie — would refashion a fish from a scale.

3. He was disinterested, too. He did not, like some preachers and reviewers, make his theme a mere text of his own essay or discourse, — a medium, proxy, or pretence. He treated of his subject, putting himself behind that. He was the crystalline medium, and like a sea of glass, — never a mote in his own by turns microscopic and telescopic lens. How minute his examination and extensive his range!

4. He was broadly impartial. Some, perhaps as able critics as he, were not so just. He wins the commendation, rarely deserved, that his equity could without the least unfairness take in such persons as Mann and Phillips, Sumner and Palfrey, Hawthorne, Arnold and Emerson, Lincoln and Choate, Dewey and King, Garrison and Webster, at once. He knew and could explain Dickens and Thackeray and George Eliot better than they could comprehend

and account for themselves. He was in his youth one of the earliest and warmest opponents of slavery, however it may have happened to him, as to some others, to be defamed by some zealot for not swearing by abolition shibboleths in every method or phrase. When stung by the great Massachusetts senator's ridicule of the higher law and his 7th of March speech, Emerson denounced him as "a man without character, every drop of blood in him looking down," Whipple could see that Webster had a real conception of America, and, with all his lack of faith and philanthropy, was loyal to his idea; had laid or re-laid in his answers to Hayne and Calhoun the foundations of constitutional freedom for the United States, and by his stanch position within the legal lines of his place foiled fresh plots of secession; pushing with his giant shoulders to postpone the Civil War for ten years, — from the time when we should have been beaten, until we might husband our resources and gather strength to prevail, — while he foresaw and shuddered at the Red Sea. Whipple's judgment of Webster was generous; Emerson's ideal, natural, inadequate, though loftily severe. Frederic Douglass tells me that a lady at the North having heard him score Webster as cruel, made answer thus: "Mr. Douglass, in many things I agree with you, but in that verdict not. I knew Webster well. Depend upon it, he is a tender-hearted man."

Mr. Webster was held to be "Ichabod" and the "lost leader." But in some things he led, and leads still. If he failed us at the pinch, and was called false at any crisis, or by his ambition misled, we cannot afford to be bitter and without thanks. Let the bronze monument yonder stand! The nation is not so furnished with statesmanship and patriotism as to find any economy in throwing him away. From our exchequer we cannot afford to give him up. I accord with Whipple on this point.

Macaulay, whom Mr. Whipple lauded, forged his earlier style. But his wit and humor were all his own, — the one a flash of lightning, the other a drop of dew. "I know," said one to him, "your idea of a public library, if you had a million dollars." "If I had the million," he answered, "I should not have the idea." — "You have lost your mind," said a debater to him. "It is plain you have not found it," was, in a solitary case of self-assertion, his reply. "My lecture is a dead failure," he declared. "Never," the Lyceum President answered, "was such a lecture delivered in this town." When I read a friendly notice of my own to him of one of his books, he held his handkerchief over his face. My regret in these remarks, nearly forty years later than my first estimate, is that I cannot command his skill to sketch in sketching him, while, with you, I think gratefully and reverently of his spirit going without pain as a breath of God.



Let me at least testify of that gentle and gracious nature in him, so undemonstrative and ashamed to appear save unawares. How good and kind and tender it essentially was, unwilling to hurt, incapable of giving or taking offence, and appearing untouched only because every slight or injury was, as it seemed, so instinctively or unconsciously warded or shed! With his matchless wit we were not wounded, but charmed. It was a razor, to shave close and make us look decent, not to draw blood; or a lancet, to relieve.

The melancholy Jacques says of all the men and women, that they have their exits and their entrances in the play on this stage of the world. I think, or have a vision, of Fields the poet-publisher, of Gould the sculptor, and of Whipple the writer, in the scene here once together, — a band of brothers gone from this theatre of time, leaving behind the mates they loved in this spectacle of earthly space and in the sacred precincts of home. We speak properly of any performance on the boards as “a piece.” The whole is unseen, beyond.

# RECOLLECTIONS

OF

## EMINENT MEN.

---

### SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF RUFUS CHOATE.

RUFUS CHOATE enjoys a peculiar and exceptional fame among American lawyers, statesmen, and orators, because of his unlikeness to any of his celebrated contemporaries. One of his friends bluntly remarked, "Webster is like other folks, only there is more of him; but as to Choate, who ever saw or knew *his* like?" He not only idealized but individualized everything he touched; and the driest law-case, when he was one of the counsel engaged, was converted into a thrilling tragedy or tragi-comedy founded on an actual event. He was a poet at the heart of his nature, and instinctively gave a dramatic or epical character to the leading persons concerned in a jury trial. It was once common for legal pedants, possessed of learning *minus* genius, to denounce as "flummery" the arguments of this advocate, who possessed learning *plus* genius; but it is now univer-

sally conceded that he was profound in the knowledge of the law, that he was both an acute and comprehensive reasoner, and that his practical sagacity in the conduct of a case was as marked as the romantic interest with which he invested it. It is to be feared, however, that this shining ornament of the legal profession will be hereafter known chiefly by the traditions of his splendid successes. My purpose is simply to record a few memories illustrating the force and flexibility of his genius and the geniality of his nature.

My admiration of Mr. Choate was formed a long time before I had the honor and pleasure of making his acquaintance. At the period when he was a young lawyer, practising in the courts of Essex County, he "pervaded" — if I may use one of his own terms — the Salem bookstores in his leisure hours. He was specially attracted to the store of Mr. John M. Ives, and he never entered it without falling into conversation with some legal or illegal brother interested in letters; and he never left it without leaving in the memory of those who listened some one of the golden sentences which dropped as naturally from his mouth as pearls from the lips of the fabled fairy. There was a circulating library connected with Mr. Ives's bookstore, and I have a vivid remembrance when as a boy I was prowling among the books on the shelves, suspending my decision as to taking out a novel of Richardson, or Fielding, or Miss Porter, or Scott, of listening with a certain guilty delight at the chaffing



going on among my elders and betters in the front store. I remember perfectly how I was impressed and fascinated by the appearance of Mr. Choate. He was not a Thaddeus of Warsaw, or a hero of the type which Mrs. Radcliffe had stamped on my imagination; but there was something strange, something "Oriental," in him which suggested the Arabian Nights. In after-years I wondered, as I wondered then, that such a remarkable creature should have dropped down, as it were, into Essex County. There seemed to be no connection between the man and his environment. He flashed his meaning in pointed phrase while his interlocutors were arraying facts and preparing arguments, and darted out of the store with a ringing laugh before they had time to send a cross-bow shaft in reply, or retort to the Parthian arrow he had gayly sped at parting.

Boy as I was, I learned then what was characteristic of Mr. Choate through life,—his horror of commonplace. Why, he seemed to say, argue about a thing which an intelligent human being should detect at the first glance? He always tried to evade bores, in youth as in age; and to him the most dreadful of bores were well-meaning men, deficient in quickness of apprehension and directness of insight, who were fond of exercising their powers of disputation in the weary work of placing on a logical foundation the indisputable. Godwin once mentioned to Coleridge that he and Mackintosh had been engaged for three hours in an argument, without arriving at a definite

conclusion. "If there had been a man of genius in the room," Coleridge retorted, "he would have settled the question in five minutes." Choate had this impatience of a man of genius with long-winded controversies.

I may add, that in my boyish remembrances the beauty of Choate's face and person early caught my fancy. He was an Apollo, though, as he walked the streets of Salem, he was an Apollo with a *slouch*. He had a way of lifting his shoulders, and an angular swinging of his frame, which were as individual as they were inartistic. Yet he was, on the whole, the most beautiful young man I ever saw. Thought, study, care, the contentions of the bar, the wear and tear of an unreposing life, at last broke up the smoothest and comeliest of human faces into weird wrinkles, which he often laughed at himself when he surveyed his countenance as depicted by the photographer. Of one of these likenesses, in which the sun had not spared a single thought-ploughed mark, he said, "It is as ugly as the devil; but still I must admit it is like — very like." Yet in his youth that face almost realized the ideal of manly beauty. His complexion was brown, but health infused into it a faint red tint which made it singularly charming to the eye. I recollect, as if it were yesterday, one Sunday afternoon when he entered Dr. Brazer's church in Salem just before the services began. He marched up the aisle (I can hit on no better expression than "marched") and entered a pew just above that in which I was

seated. The sermon was no doubt good, — as all the sermons of Dr. Brazer were good, — but my attention was fixed on Choate. For an hour I watched his expressive face, noticing every variation of its lines, as they indicated agreement or disagreement with the eloquent clergyman's Unitarian discourse; and all I knew of the sermon was gathered from what I considered its effect on the wonderful creature who seemed to my boyish imagination to have strayed into the pew from some region altogether apart from any civilization heretofore known to Salem. There was something mysterious about him. In glancing over the occupants of the other pews, — the merchant aristocracy of the town, — I was struck by their commonplace character, as contrasted with this stranger, who appeared to belong to another race, and who might, for all I knew, have been imported by these merchants from Calcutta or Singapore, bringing with him the suggestion of —

“Gums of Paradise and Eastern air.”

He was then in the perfection of his manly beauty, — the beauty of robust physical health combined with that indefinable beauty which comes from the palpable presence of intellect and genius in brow, cheek, eye, lip, and the very pose of the head. I was then about ten years old; but the kind of admiring wonder I then felt in looking at him affected me, many years afterward, when I had made his personal acquaintance. There was always in him something “rich

and strange," something foreign to our New England "notions," something which distinguished him from all other eminent Americans. A humorous friend of mine once declared that he himself was originally intended for an inhabitant of Jupiter, but the Earth caught him in his passage and hauled him in. Mr. Choate, in some such way, always seemed to me to have been arrested by the insolent gravitating power lodged in the Earth, and drawn violently into our prosaic New England while he was joyously speeding on to his appropriate home in some distant Mars or Jupiter.

As regards Mr. Choate's whole nature, I was impressed not so much by any particular faculty as by its central force. He was fundamentally strong at the heart of his nature, — strong in personality, strong in will, strong in mental manhood; and he used his rare powers not merely to please, persuade, astonish, and convince those whom he addressed, but to *overcome* them. He must have been personally conscious of that grand mood which Wordsworth celebrates :

"Such animation often do I find,  
Power in my breast, wings growing in my mind."

In his diary, July, 1844, he indicates what he considers should be the characteristics of a legislator's speech. These are: "Truth for the staple, good taste the form, *persuasion to act* for the end." It was the "persuasion to act" that was always in his mind, whether he addressed a popular gathering, a jury, or the Senate of the United States.

Indeed, in jury trials his main object was to influence the *wills* of the twelve men before him. He addressed their understandings; he fascinated their imaginations; he stirred their feelings; but, after all, he used all his powers in subordination to that one primal power which dwelt in his magnetic individuality, by which he *subdued* them, bringing on that part of their being which uttered its reluctant "yes" or "no" the pressure of a stronger nature as well as of a larger mind. As an advocate, he thoroughly understood that men in the aggregate are not reasonable beings, but men with the capacity of being occasionally made reasonable, if their prejudices are once blown away by a superior force of blended reason and emotion,—in other words, by force of being. His triumphs at the bar were due to the fact that he was a powerful *man*, victorious over other men because he had a stronger manhood, a stronger selfhood, than anybody on the jury he addressed.

On one occasion I happened to be a witness in a case where a trader was prosecuted for obtaining goods under false pretences. Mr. Choate took the ground that the seeming knavery of the accused was due to the circumstance that he had a deficient business intelligence,—in short, that he unconsciously rated all his geese as swans. He was right in his view. The foreman of the jury, however, was a hard-headed, practical man, a model of business intellect and integrity, but with an incapacity of understanding any intellect or conscience radically differing from his



own. Mr. Choate's argument, so far as the facts and the law were concerned, was through in an hour. Still he went on speaking. Hour after hour passed, and yet he continued to speak with constantly increasing eloquence, repeating and recapitulating, without any seeming reason, facts which he had already stated and arguments which he had already urged. The truth was, as I gradually learned, that he was engaged in a hand-to-hand — or rather in a brain-to-brain and a heart-to-heart — contest with the foreman, whose resistance he was determined to break down, but who confronted him for three hours with defiance observable in every rigid line of his honest countenance. "You fool!" was the burden of the advocate's ingenious argument; "you rascal!" was the phrase legibly printed on the foreman's incredulous face. But at last the features of the foreman began to relax, and at the end the stern lines melted into acquiescence with the opinion of the advocate, who had been storming at the defences of his mind, his heart, and his conscience for five hours, and had now entered as victor. He compelled the foreman to admit the unpleasant fact that there were existing human beings whose mental and moral constitution differed from his own, and who were yet as honest in intention as he was, but lacked his clear perception and sound judgment. The verdict was, "Not guilty." It was a just verdict; but it was mercilessly assailed by merchants who had lost money by the prisoner, and who were hounding him down as an

enemy to the human race, as another instance of Choate's lack of mental and moral honesty in the defence of persons accused of crime. The fact that the foreman of the jury which returned the verdict belonged to the class that most vehemently attacked Choate was sufficient of itself to disprove such allegations. As I listened to Choate's argument in this case, I felt assured that he would go on speaking until he dropped dead on the floor, rather than have relinquished his clutch on the soul of the one man on the jury whom he knew would control the opinion of the others.

Mr. Choate was well aware of the contemptuous criticism made on the peculiarities of his manner, both in respect to elocution and rhetoric. Having within himself the proud consciousness of unrecognized power, he notes in his diary, under the date of September, 1844: "If I live, all blockheads *which* are shaken at certain mental peculiarities shall know and feel a reasoner, a lawyer, and a man of business." Now as every blockhead is still entitled to the claim of being "a man and a brother," there is something delicious in this substitution of "*which*" for "*who*" in referring to the ceremonious and pompous blockheads of the bar; for, grammatically, this change of the pronoun reduces them from the dignity of persons into "animals and inanimate things."

Mr. Choate of course possessed the art of concealing the art by which he overcame opposition. In his steady pressure on the wills of the jury he appeared

to be cosily arguing with them, or lifting them into a region of impassioned sentiment and imagination where he was at home, and where the jury were made to feel that they shared with him all the delights of such a lofty communion with everything beautiful and sublime. In the celebrated Tirrell trial, the inhabitants of Boston — constituting themselves into a jury, deciding on the evidence presented in newspaper reports — had declared that the accused was guilty of murder, and should be hanged. The judgment of the most eminent representatives of the Bench and the Bar was this, — that the verdict of “Not guilty” was legally right and just. But the jury had a hard time of it when they returned to their usual avocations, as all their companions and friends jeered at them for being taken in by Choate’s “humbug.” One of these jurymen defended himself by a statement which has survived: “Oh!” he declared, “we did n’t care a sixpence for that stuff about som-nam-bulism; but then, you know, we could n’t believe the testimony of them abandoned women. Now, could we?” He had yielded to Choate without knowing it, and had yielded on the point where the Government’s case was defective, — a point which Choate had specially emphasized.

During Mr. Choate’s contests with the leaders of the Suffolk Bar he was once opposed by an impudent advocate from another State, imported specially to put him down by sheer force of assurance. Choate described him as perverting the law with “an imper-



turbable perpendicularity of assertion" which it was difficult to upset. On this occasion the lawyer closed his argument with the remark that he was more confirmed in his view of the law of the case, because the distinguished counsel opposed to him had taken the same ground in an argument a few days before at Lowell. Instead of denying the false assertion, which most lawyers would have done, Choate quietly replied, "Yes, and was overruled by the Court." It seems to me that this is a wonderful example of his quickness in instantly deciding on the right way of meeting before a jury a seemingly crushing appeal to popular prejudice.

On one occasion Mr. Choate was called upon to defend a Roman Catholic priest, who was accused of making what appeared to be the first approaches of a criminal assault on a girl he met in one of the side streets of Boston. The advocate took what was in all probability the true view of the situation,—that the priest was returning from his church absorbed in his devotions, had accidentally met the girl in his path, and that the abrupt jostling with the fair prosecutor was accidental. But the case was prosecuted with all the animosity of Protestant prejudice, and the foreman of the jury was an Orthodox deacon. I remember of the case only this sentence: "I have proved to you, gentlemen, that this collision was purely an accident; such an accident, Mr. Foreman, as might have happened to you or to me returning from a Union meeting, or a Liberty meeting, or a

Jenny Lind concert, or, what is infinitely better, *a monthly concert of prayer.*" If solemnity was ever imaged in a human countenance, it was when Choate, advancing to the deacon, brought his sad, weird, wrinkled face into close proximity with the foreman's, and in low, deep tones uttered that magical form of words by which orthodox Protestants recognize each other all over New England, — the "monthly concert of prayer." I think he gained his case by that happy display of sympathy with the absorption in divine things which is supposed to follow such a "concert" in all Congregational churches.

In one of Mr. Choate's contentions at the Bar, his opponent, a man distinguished for his high moral character, took it into his head that his learned brother had impugned his honesty; and he made a fervid speech, declaring that such an imputation, during his long professional career, had never been even insinuated before. Mr. Choate, preserving his admirable composure, disclaimed any such imputation, with the preliminary statement that he was quite unprepared "for such a tempestuous outbreak of extraordinary sensibility" on the part of his friend. His power of constructing what may be called architectural sentences like this on the spur of the moment was by no means the least of his gifts. Adjectives, quaint, witty, or resounding, instantly came at his call to describe, illustrate, or qualify any substantive that was uppermost in his mind at the time.

In an insurance trial in which Mr. Choate was engaged, he spent a day or more in the cross-examination of a witness who swore positively as to the facts in dispute, but who was compelled by the advocate's searching questions to admit his general bad character. The testimony of this scamp had to be broken down, or the case would be lost. In addressing the jury, Mr. Choate gave a vivid presentation of the vices and crimes of the witness, whom he represented as the basest and meanest of mankind; and then asked, "Do you suppose, gentlemen, that in this vast violation of all the sentiments and virtues that bind men together in civil society, *veracity* alone would survive in the chaos of such a character? — 'the last rose of summer' on *such* a soil?" The emphasis on "veracity" and "such" was potent enough to kill the witness. The jury disbelieved him, and Mr. Choate gained his case. The rogue may or may not have testified truly as to the point under discussion, but truth could not be reasonably expected from a person who was self-convicted of almost every wickedness but perjury.

In his arguments for persons who had become complicated in seemingly criminal acts of which they were, at least, not so guilty as they were accused of being, his masterly way of putting himself by imagination in the place of his clients, and exhibiting all the pathos that could be elicited from their embarrassments and struggles, often drenched his clients themselves in irrepressible tears. They hardly knew

before what heroes and martyrs they were. They wept at the eloquent recapitulation of what they had suffered and done; they became poetic personages, worthy of the pen of Scott or Dickens; indeed, they were so much affected that they considered Lawyer Choate should charge little for presenting them before the community in their true light, and therefore often forgot or neglected to pay him anything. His dramatic power in exhibiting the interior feelings of the half guilty, the quarter guilty, and the guilty who are perfectly innocent in their own conceit, and therefore regard a prosecution as a persecution, was so wonderful that many of the persons who were acquitted through his exertions never paid him what they would have paid an advocate who had less identified himself with their interests and characters. Indeed, after his work was done he appeared himself to set a modest estimate on its value. The occasions when he obtained large fees were due to his partner, who made the contracts beforehand; for Mr. Choate generally considered the obstacles in the way of getting a verdict for his clients formidable until the case was settled, and was indifferent to the amount of the fee only after he had succeeded.

But he was not only an accomplished lawyer: he was, at times, an eager politician. I will try to recall some sentences in his popular addresses. In a campaign appeal to the Boston Whigs, when Polk, a comparatively unknown man, was the Democratic candidate for the Presidency, Mr. Choate gave full play



to his peculiar wit and fancy. "We will," he exclaimed "*return* James K. Polk to the Convention that *discovered* him!" In depicting Polk's sure defeat, he declared that he would "disappear like the lost Pleiad, where no telescope could find him!" In reading an "open letter" of the Free-soil Democrats, "surreptitiously" published in the New York "Evening Post," he paused at the end, as if overcome by surprise. "I find, gentlemen, that this letter is marked 'private and confidential,' and such, I trust, you will consider it!" The idea of confiding a secret of that sort to three thousand persons struck every man in the audience with a sense of its humor, and there was a roar of applause, which for some minutes prevented the orator from proceeding. On another occasion he addressed a Union meeting in Faneuil Hall, composed equally of Whigs and Democrats. I wish types could express the wit of one passage by indicating the rise, culmination, and sudden fall of his voice. "You Whig!" he exclaimed, "and YOU DEMOCRAT WHO ARE JUST AS GOOD AS A WHIG — in your own opinion!" The last clause should be printed in the smallest type which the printer can command. The laughter which succeeded the qualification was deafening, and it came from the representatives of both parties.

When Mr. Sumner's first election to the Senate of the United States was in doubt, Sumner met Choate as he was entering the Court House. "Ah, Mr. Choate," said Sumner pleasantly, "marching, I sup-

pose, to another forensic triumph?" Choate had on his old camlet cloak, known to all members of the Bar; and drawing it melodramatically up over his weird face, and looking like one of the witches in "Macbeth," he mockingly answered, in his deepest tones, "Glamis thou art, and Cawdor!" and then disappeared through the door. Sumner was accused of lacking the perception of humor, but he always told this incident as if he had it in a high degree.

A distinguished Free-soiler, after the nomination of Taylor for the Presidency, accosted Mr. Choate in the street, and told him that the Free-soil section of the Whig party was determined to oppose the nomination at the polls. "What can you do?" said Mr. Choate. "Perhaps little," was the reply; "but at least Massachusetts can fire her gun in the air." "Yes," at once retorted Mr. Choate, "and hit her guardian angel in the eye."

When Dr. Webster, the murderer of Parkman, was in prison after his conviction, Mr. Choate met in a street car an eminent clergyman, who was inclined to believe that the criminal was innocent, and who visited him frequently. "How do you find the object of your pastoral care?" asked Mr. Choate. "Well," was the reply, "I always find him *in*." "And," returned Mr. Choate, "it will be long, I think, before you find him *out*." Indeed, in repartee he always had the last word. Nobody ever went away from him with the consolation that he had surpassed him in quickness of retort.

In one of his literary lectures, Mr. Choate referred to the fact that Marie Antoinette, after her unsuccessful attempt to escape with her husband from France, entered on the evening of that day her new prison-house a beautiful woman, and on the next morning emerged from it with her loveliness all gone. He put it in this way: "The beauty of Austria fell from her brow, like a veil, in a single night." Anybody who appreciates the meaning of the word "imagination" cannot fail to note the force of "the beauty of *Austria*." It was not merely the queen's individual beauty, but the beauty of her mother, Maria Theresa, and of all the princesses of the Hapsburg House since its foundation, that fell from *her* brow "*like a veil*" in a single night. The hopelessness of the struggle of all rank and beauty against the ghastly uprising of an oppressed people is also indicated in this grand imaginative generalization. The beauty was a mere "veil," that must be dropped when the fierce passions of a famished and enraged populace overturned all the sentiments which sprung from an aristocratic chivalry, based on a worship of beauty nobly born. What was most curious in this utterance was the lowness of the tone of the orator's voice as he delivered it. I am sure that the words "*like a veil*" could not have been heard by fifty persons among the three thousand who listened to the lecture. I happened to be very near the speaker, and noted how completely he seemed abstracted from the audience when, in a tone of thrilling, tender sadness, he

interpolated this statement as a parenthesis between the rush of words which preceded and followed it.

On one hot summer afternoon, a day or two after he had delivered his address on Kossuth before the literary societies of a Vermont College,—an address all ablaze with the characteristics of his resplendent rhetoric, but still with a statesman-like judgment and forecast regulating its impassioned eloquence,—I met him at the Boston Athenæum, and naturally alluded to the splendid success of his oration. “Ah!” he replied, with an immense yawn, “was it a success? I thought not. By-the-way, did n’t you talk to the same societies last year?” I was reluctantly compelled to admit that I was guilty of the offence. “Well, the truth is (between ourselves, mind you!) that I found you had so corrupted the young men with your confounded rhetoric, that my plain common-sense had no effect on them whatever.” The impressive seriousness with which this reproof was given was only relieved by a power, which Mr. Choate possessed, of indicating the humor of a remark through a peculiar flash from the white portion of his left eye, while the rest of his countenance remained in immovable and impenetrable gravity. The wink he gave me!—shall I ever forget it?

On another of the occasions when I had the pleasure of meeting him, the topic was the relative rank of the great generals of the world. “On the whole,” he said, “I think we must take Hannibal as the



greatest of them all. For just look at the effrontery of the fellow, scaling the Alps with a lot of Carthaginians — ragamuffins, *niggers* — to fight the *Destiny* of Rome! And then, you know, the scamp, with his rascal rout, nearly succeeded in his purpose of overturning the design even of Divine Providence! You may depend upon it, he is the biggest general of the whole gang of them!"

Choate was never tired of eulogizing Cicero and Burke. "The man," he once said to me, "who will write an article adequately describing, comparing, and contrasting those two men of genius will do a great work." "But," I answered, "that is the very thing that all of us are eager for you to do. You can do it better than anybody else." "Oh, of course," he answered, with a shrug of his shoulders; "you may be sure it shall be done." Of course he never did it.

On a transient meeting with him, the conversation turned on the charge that Burke's seeming apostasy to the cause of liberty in his works on the French Revolution was caused by a desire for power and a pension. I alluded to the impossibility that character and passion could be subsidized as well as imagination and genius; that Burke must have been morally honest in writing the works that incidentally gave him some fifteen thousand dollars a year, and that those writers who accused him of being bought by the English court grossly misapprehended him. "Misapprehended him!" exclaimed Choate;

“they were *beasts!* BEASTS!” The way he rose from his chair and strode about the room as he uttered this opinion convinced me, at least, that his own political course could never have been influenced by the desire either of power or money. Indeed, everybody who knew Choate knew that there was nothing in the power of the people of the United States to give in the way of political preferment that he regarded as worth striving for as a matter of political ambition. He had been a Representative and a Senator in Congress; but as he grew old he disliked everything in politics which drew him away from his library during the brief hours of leisure which his professional engagements enabled him to enjoy. He spoke for his political party and his political convictions when he was called upon to do so, but the ordinary details of politics were abhorrent to him. They were a bore. The only assaults on his political integrity were made during the later years of his life. Those who opposed his opinions—and I ranked among them—must have known that it was a real sentiment of patriotism, however misdirected, and not any paltry love of lucre or place, that inspired the thrilling addresses with which he bravely confronted the dominant sentiment of Massachusetts after 1850. It is curious that those who accuse him of cowardice and time-serving at this period forget that only obloquy could result from the position he took. The coward and the time-server are seen in the wake of the reformer, when the reformer has the

vote of the State with him. Choate withstood an impulse so strong that any sagacity much less keen than his must have known that it was more politic to follow than to withstand the movement; but he deliberately chose the unpopular side, and cheerfully submitted to be lampooned by hundreds of politicians who would have hailed him as the noblest and most eloquent of men if he had only drifted with the stream instead of manfully breasting it. His opinions were so opposed to mine, that it is a delight to record this testimony to his political honesty. He had nothing to gain by the course he pursued, and he had much to lose. Now that the passions of that time have subsided, all Republicans can afford to do justice to Choate. He was not on their side; but had he been on their side, they would have forced honors upon him. He never, by-the-way, during his political career had any need to solicit office; it was always freely urged upon him as a testimony of his fellow-citizens to his genius and capacity.

But to return to my recollections of him. It was impossible to meet him for even half a minute, as he was striding from his dwelling to his daily business, without eliciting from his ever-active mind some quaint remark. A friend of mine greeted him one day just as he was turning from Washington Street into a narrow lane leading to the Court House. Mr. Choate answered the salutation, and, as he turned to go down the narrow passage said, with much mock gravity, "Convenient, though ignominious!"

He was once engaged in the great legal controversy between the different owners of water-power on the Blackstone River. The case was one which really rested on nice mathematical computations, and was finally settled by mathematicians. Choate was puzzled by the intricacy of the case, and meeting Mr. Folsom, the librarian of the Boston Athenæum, one morning in a book-store, he said to him: "Pray, Mr. Folsom, have we in the Athenæum any books relating to the flow of water, the turning of it back, and playing the devil with it generally?"

There was so much intensity in Mr. Choate's nature that I often wondered how he could help tormenting himself in thinking over the cases he lost, where the verdict should have been for the side on which he was engaged. One afternoon, after he had made an address to the Legislature, or a committee of the Legislature, of one of the New England States, and had plainly failed of success through a political prejudice excited against him by the opposing counsel, I met him calmly exploring the alcoves of the Athenæum in search of some book. In alluding to the palpable injustice of the reception of his legal argument the day before, I expressed my astonishment that he should seem so careless about the result. "Oh!" he answered, "when I have once argued a case, and it is settled, I am done with it. I cast it forcibly out of my mind, and never allow it to trouble my peace. I should go mad," he added, with a sudden lift of his hand through his abundant locks,

“if I allowed it to abide in my thoughts. What, by-the-way, do you think of this curious Life of Shelley, written by a fellow who calls himself a Jefferson somebody — Hogg?” In an instant the conversation was thus changed to Shelley and his latest biographer. I never met a man whose genius was as sensitive as his, who had such a complete control of his mind and sensibility. He was the absolute autocrat of all the thoughts and fancies teeming in his fertile mind, exercised over them a tyrannous dominion, and never allowed them to possess *him*, but always possessed them.

One of the charms of Mr. Choate's conversation was his habit of exaggeration. To attend the performance of Mozart's “Don Giovanni” was like listening, he said, to ten thousand *forests* of birds. He knew that no exaggeration in mere words could adequately express the delight which a sympathetic mind feels in coming into vital acquaintance with a work of transcendent genius in any department of literature and the fine arts. Ten thousand birds would be a small testimony to the melodies of Mozart; but ten thousand *forests* of birds is a comparison which indicates the rapture of wonder and admiration that Mozart's masterpiece excites in all souls capable of feeling its beauty. With this tendency to verbal exaggeration, Choate had that instantaneous humorous recoil from extravagant assertion characteristic of ardent natures whose sense of the ludicrous is as quick as their sense of the beautiful



and the sublime. "Interpret to me the libretto," he said to his daughter, "lest I dilate at the wrong emotion." Sydney Smith never said anything better than that!

Nobody at the Bar ever equalled him in paying ironical compliments to the judges who blocked his way to the hearts and understandings of juries. Judge Shaw was specially noted for the gruff way in which he interposed such obstacles, and Shaw's depth of legal learning was not more conspicuous than his force of character. "'Tis n't so, Mr. Choate," was a frequent interruption, when Shaw was on the Bench and Choate was arguing a case before him. Choate's side remarks on the judge have passed into the stereotyped jokes of the Bar, and are now somewhat venerable. One is, I think, not commonly stated in the exact words. "I always approach Judge Shaw," he said, "as a savage approaches his fetich, — knowing that he is ugly, but feeling that he is great." Of Judge Story he once remarked: "I never heard him pronounce a judgment in which he did not argue the case better than the counsel on either side; and for which," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "he might very properly have been impeached." He delighted in gravely joking with a judge. Thus he once asked that a case might be postponed, owing to his engagement in another court. The judge replied that the case was one in which he might write out his argument. With a mock solemnity, which it always seemed to me no other human countenance



could so readily assume, he replied, "I write well, your Honor, but *slowly*." As his handwriting resembled the tracks of wildcats, with their claws dipped in ink, madly dashing over the surface of a folio sheet of white paper, the assembled Bar could not restrain their laughter. Indeed, it is affirmed that he could not decipher his own handwriting after a case was concluded, and had to call in experts to explain it to himself. He congratulated himself on the fact that if he failed to get a living at the Bar, he could still go to China and support himself by his pen; that is, by decorating tea-chests.

On one occasion he was employed by a half-crazed litigant to carry a case, dismissed by the court below, to the Supreme Court of the State. It was a case resembling the one immortalized by Scott,—that of Peter Peebles *versus* Plainstaines; but the Peter Peebles in this controversy was as rich as he was litigious. Choate frankly told him that the exceptions his counsel had taken were of no account in law; but the client insisted that he should present them to the assembled judges, and was indifferent as to the fee. There never was a more solemn face presented to a bench of jurists than the face of Choate, as he argued point after point of this hopeless case; but it was observed that every time he made a new point he introduced it with a sly wink to some one of the lawyers in attendance. The Bench and the lawyers were tormented with the agony which comes from laughter decorously suppressed, while the advocate,

except his occasional winks to his brother lawyers, was the very personification of legal gravity.

At dinner parties he was the most delightful of companions. "That," he remarked of some Ashburton sherry, which was rather strong than delicate, — "that is a very good Faneuil-Hallish drink!" His talk on books was always delightful and discriminating, with an occasional eccentric deviation from the general judgment on an author, which made it all the more fascinating. The world of books, indeed, was that "real world" in which he lived whenever the pauses of his professional engagements enabled him to indulge in the luxury; and he adroitly dodged every social invitation in order to devote to Bacon, Shakspeare, Milton, and Burke — his favorite English authors — the hours which others lose in what is ironically called "Society." In fact, few persons in Boston could converse with him unless they met him in his daily walk around the Common, or in the Athenæum, or as he went from his residence to the Court House. Yet no Bostonian seemed more open to conversation, and certainly no one ever left, in his chance meetings with acquaintances of all grades and pursuits, such an impression of good-nature and brilliancy. Boston swarms to-day with admirers of Choate who only met him accidentally, as I did. In a minute's conversation he condensed what could have been obtained from no other celebrities of the city in an hour's discourse. He appeared, flashed on you a remark, and then disappeared

to his work. Yet more persons knew him and talked about him than knew or talked about any other eminent Bostonian.

Mr. Choate greedily devoured every book relating to ancient Greece, even the most ephemeral. Of one of these he said: "The author seems to know a good deal, but he is too confident as to those mysterious Pelasgians at the bottom of the whole history; he *Pelasgizes* too much." The English historians of Greece, even Thirlwall and Grote, he thought were more or less biassed by party feelings. In writing about ancient Greece, "they were consciously or unconsciously influenced," he said, "by their opinions as to the personal and political character of Charles James Fox." As to his own method of learning the history of Greece, it may be affirmed that he studied the works of the Greek orators, philosophers, and historians in order to become mentally a citizen of Greece, and thus to look at Greek life through a Greek's eyes. By his realizing imagination he instantly nullified the hard conditions of Time; sent his mind and heart back two thousand or twenty-five hundred years to contemplate a civilization entirely different from ours; and often, while he was striding around Boston Common in the age of Buchanan, he was really making himself a contemporary of Pericles. His imagination was in ancient Athens, while his body was in what is ironically called "the modern Athens." As he pushed rapidly along in his favorite afternoon walk, it was plain that

he was not regarding the objects before his bodily eyes, but those before his mental vision; that he was attending, perhaps, the performance of a tragedy of Sophocles or a comedy of Aristophanes; or was indulging in a pleasant game of chaffing with Socrates, in some Athenian mechanic's shop, on the transcendental "good and fair," as contrasted with the descendental bad and mean; or was contesting with Demosthenes a cause before the "fierce democracy" of Athens; or was exhibiting, in a visit to Aspasia, that exquisite courtesy to women in which he excelled all other gentlemen of his time. If I ever crossed him in his walks, and saw the weird eyes gazing into distant time and space, I made it a point of honor not to interrupt his meditations, but to pass on with a simple bow of recognition. Why should I, for the sake of five minutes' delightful conversation, interrupt this hard-worked man of genius in his glorious imaginative communion with the great of old? The temptation was strong, but I always overcame it. When he was in Boston, I ventured to accost him; when he was in Athens, I very properly considered that he was in much better company than any which Boston could afford; and as an humble denizen of the place, I thought it judicious not to obtrude myself into a select circle of immortals to which I was not invited.

To obtain a complete idea of Mr. Choate's various talents and accomplishments, the reader is referred

to the edition of his Works, in two octavo volumes, published in Boston in 1862, and edited by Professor S. G. Brown, who also contributed a long and excellent biography. The biography includes copious extracts from Mr. Choate's private journals and familiar correspondence. These enable us to penetrate to the inmost heart of the man, and prove how false were many of the rash judgments passed upon him while he lived. It also contains a number of communications from his legal and political associates and opponents, who, whether they agreed or disagreed with him, preserved a vivid impression of the force and fertility of his mind, and the manliness and kindness of his nature. But its great merit consists in vindicating Mr. Choate from the vulgar imputations on his legal and political integrity; that is, on his intellectual conscientiousness. It shows conclusively that he considered the exercise of his powers in jury trials as an "office" and not a "trade;" that he was convinced that his part in the determination of a cause was as much provided for in the law of the land as the parts assigned to the judge, to the opposing counsel, and to the jury; and that as an "official" in the administration of justice, it would be scandalous for him to spare time, labor, knowledge, eloquence, in defence of his particular client. *That* course was decreed by the whole theory of English and American law. He felt the obligation imposed upon him so keenly, that in his early private memoranda, when a cause was decided adversely to his



view, he reproached himself for not having done more for his client ; in other words, for not having fulfilled his duties as an *official* in the administration of the law with more address, ability, and command of the law. It was only by degrees that he surmounted this self-distrust, and became able to dismiss from his mind at once a case when it had been finally settled.

The volumes edited by Professor Brown contain also Mr. Choate's most valuable literary and patriotic addresses, and his best speeches while he was a Senator of the United States. Whatever may be the criticisms on his political career, there can be no doubt that he never had, like the elder brother mentioned in Scripture, any "ulterior views on the fatted calf." He was almost forced by his party into every high political position he occupied. He was not without political ambition, but it was an ambition disconnected from any possibility of personal emolument, and indeed sadly interfering with his professional business, and with his natural desire to provide a modest competence for his family. Everything mean and base in politics he absolutely loathed. To him "machine politics" were equally a bore and a blunder. But when great national interests were at stake he was willing to sacrifice what few hours he could steal from his professional engagements, from his study of the poets, historians, and philosophers of Greece and Rome, from his delightful communion with the spirits of Shakspeare, Bacon, Milton, and Burke, to the preparation of orations designed to influence the



legislative or popular mind at periods where what is called a "crisis" threatens the interests of a nation. The editor has demonstrated that whether Mr. Choate was right or wrong in the varying aspects of his political creed, he was pure from all forms of avarice, — the insidious avarice of fame, no less than the more open avarice of money and office. In short, he was at heart a patriot, even when the course he took disappointed many of his best friends and admirers.

What Professor Brown does not notice — probably as beneath the dignity of biography — are some of the peculiar relations of Choate with Webster. They were strong personal and political friends. When Webster desired to raise money, he sometimes got Choate to indorse his note; when Webster ventured on a daring political move, he got Choate to indorse his policy, — and the result was that in either case the indorsement entailed on Choate pecuniary embarrassment or popular obloquy. If one should consult the archives of the Boston Merchants' Bank, there would doubtless appear sufficient reasons why Choate should himself have been occasionally troubled with a want of money, on account of heedlessly affixing the hieroglyphic which passed for his name on the back of a "promise to pay" which bore the more flowing and familiar signature of Daniel Webster; and whenever his immense popularity as an orator was at all abated, it was generally found that what he lost in popular estimation was due to his honest and cordial indorsement of his friend's political conduct.

The only occasion on which Choate was ever charged with showing the white feather was in his contest with Clay during the early days of Tyler's Administration. Clay was the champion of a bill for the establishment of a United States Bank. The bill was sure to pass both Houses of Congress. Choate had probably been informed by Webster that the President would veto it unless certain clauses were omitted, and he eagerly urged that such omissions be made, in order to insure its becoming a law. Clay instantly detected that some communication had passed from the Secretary of State to the Senator of Massachusetts, and pitilessly forced Choate into a corner, whence it was impossible for him to escape. "Why are you so confident that the bill will be vetoed? What right have you to suggest to the Senate of the United States, a co-ordinate branch of the government, that the Executive is opposed to a bill, before it has been presented to him for his signature? What are your private means of information? Tell us the name of the man from whom you received such information." What could be done by dexterity in evading the real point in issue Choate did marvellously well; but his friend Webster had got him into a "fix," from which neither courage nor ingenuity could get him out. Clay was insolent and overbearing, for he was attacked by one of his periodical fits of hatred against his great rival for the prize of the Presidency, who was then Secretary of State, and he lavished on Choate the wrath he in-

tended to fall on Webster. It was sounded all over the country that Choate had quailed before Clay. Even in the State he represented, Choate was long considered to have lacked in this instance that intrepidity which he had never before failed to show in any contest at the Bar or in the Senate. The truth is that Clay on the next meeting of the Senate magnanimously apologized for the rudeness of his assault, and shook hands with Choate with all the cordiality that can be expected from a statesman who is immeasurably ambitious. So far as Choate was wrong in this conflict it was owing to his friendship for Webster; and that there was not a taint of cowardice in his nature was soon after shown in his contest with the great fire-eater of the South, the redoubtable Senator M'Duffie, of South Carolina. His reply to M'Duffie's violent and insolent assault on his tariff speech is a masterpiece of argument, edged with every appliance of scorn, sarcasm, and invective which his wit and fancy could command. There was no question as to his courage in *that* encounter. M'Duffie was a duellist debater, whose body was riddled with bullets received in many a quarrel which his effrontery had provoked; but he submitted to Choate's "punishment" without a thought of sending him a challenge. It is doubtful if his contentious and belligerent temper ever before quietly endured such a series of polished insults as Choate heaped upon him.

Still it must be admitted that Choate, in his political connection with Webster, seemed to submit to the

control of a master-mind. No two men could be more widely contrasted in their characters, in their mental processes, in their style of expression. They were often brought into conflict in the trial of causes; at times it appeared as if they were mortal enemies, so strenuous was each in supporting his particular side; and as an advocate Choate grappled with Webster—mind with mind, and man with man—with an intrepid pertinacity which left no doubt on the court and jury that his respect for him did not control the vehement logic and still more vehement rhetoric with which he urged, against Webster's arguments and eloquence, the strong points of the case he was employed to state and defend. On one occasion, while Webster sat gravely listening to the impassioned eloquence of his opponent, he turned to one of the junior counsel and remarked: "Some of our technical brethren of the Bar would call all that flimsy humbug; if it be so, which I deny, it is still humbug which stirs men's souls to their inmost depths. It is reason impelled by passion, sustained by legal learning, and adorned by fancy." There were few advocates that Webster feared more than Choate, when there was a trial of strength between them. On such occasions it was observed that he studiously refrained from any attempt to rival his opponent in eloquence. He adopted a dry, hard, sensible tone of statement and argument. He ironically complimented the learned counsel opposed to him for his impassioned flights of eloquence, which as poetry he had himself enjoyed as much as he sup-



posed the twelve honest and practical men who were to decide on the case had doubtless enjoyed them. Nothing could be better, if questions of fact and law were to be influenced by beautiful displays of wit and imagination, than his learned brother's argument. "But, gentlemen," — and here Webster assumed all the weight and consequence which his imposing form and penetrating voice naturally gave him, — "this is a question not of poetry, but of fact. It is purely a matter of commonplace, every-day occurrence. There are no heroes and no heroines in it, no tragedy and no comedy, but plain people like you and me — mere Smiths and Robinsons; and you are called upon to decide between them, as you would decide a dispute between your own friends and neighbors." He would then proceed to reduce all the circumstances of the case to the low level of actual life, pitilessly ridicule Choate's high-wrought rhetoric, and exhibit the bare skeleton facts, stripped of all their coverings, in connection with the law that applied to them, confident that there were twelve solid and sensible Websters in the jury-box who would sustain him in his judgment of the case. He sometimes succeeded, sometimes failed, in this process of disenchantment; but at any rate he rarely in his legal contests with Choate availed himself of his latent power of overwhelming declamation, in which his logic was made thoroughly red-hot with passion, and, so to speak, burned its way into the minds of the jury. Thus in the famous "Smith-will" case, in Northampton, Choate was opposed to Webster, and made one of

the most learned, ingenious, powerful, and impassioned arguments ever addressed to a Massachusetts court. Webster replied by a simple statement of the case, and studiously avoided any rivalry with Choate in respect to eloquence. Webster obtained the verdict, not so much by the force of his argument as by the singular felicity with which he conducted the examination of the principal witness in the case, who was afflicted with a nervous timidity which in a jury trial might have been converted into an indication of insanity, had not Webster extended to him his powerful protection, and prevented the other side from cross-examining him into delirium. As the case really depended on the sanity of this witness, Choate's magnificent argument proved of no avail. It is a pity, however, that his subtle analysis of morbid states of mind which are ever on the point of toppling over into insanity has not been preserved.

But while as an advocate Choate boldly confronted Webster in the trial of causes, and at the Bar was ever ready to put his individuality as well as his intellect and legal learning into opposition to Webster's, he showed, as has been previously stated, an unmistakable sense of inferiority to him in statesmanship, and in questions of public policy almost always followed his lead. He did it in his own peculiar way, but everybody more or less felt that he was a follower and not a leader in matters of the higher politics of the country. There were several occasions — notably that after Webster had made his speech of the 7th of March,



1850 — when Choate might easily have assumed the leadership in Massachusetts of the party which ten years later obtained the control of the whole political administration of the country; but he preferred, against all temptations that could be presented to his ambition, to stand by the man whom he had deliberately elected as his chief. There was no servility in this choice; it was rather owing to an inward feeling that in political experience and sagacity he was no match for the great lawyer he had fearlessly enough encountered at the Bar.

Perhaps the weight and power of Webster's character were due as much to the hours he spent in the woods and fields and on the ocean, chatting with farmers or sailors as he was engaged in hunting or fishing, as to the hours he spent in his study. He was essentially an out-of-doors man, devoting a full third of the year to the pursuits or sports of a country gentleman; often, indeed, following out the trains of a logical argument while he was tramping along through muddy forests rifle in hand, eager for an opportunity to get a good shot at game, or framing sonorous periods as his boat swayed up and down on the waves of the Atlantic, while he was eagerly watching an opportunity to hook a large cod or a giant halibut. It is reported that the celebrated passage, which every school-boy in the land knows by heart, "Venerable men! you have come down to us from a former generation," was both conceived and audibly uttered as he was exultingly hauling in a huge fish;

and the dying cod or halibut, however sad might be his condition in respect to a more important matter, than listening to eloquence, had at least the advantage of being the first living thing that heard that immortal apostrophe to the survivors of the Revolutionary war. Now, such communion with Nature, both passive and active, gave to Webster's logic and eloquence an *objective* character. The breath of the pine-woods of New England, the exhilarating ocean breeze, in some mysterious way stole into his profoundest arguments addressed to the Senate or the Supreme Court, while his intimate knowledge of ordinary men in their ordinary occupations recommended what he said as conformable to the plain good sense of average mankind. "He is one of our folks," was the general judgment pronounced at thousands of New England village firesides when one of his great speeches in the Senate was read aloud to the assembled family; and they thoughtfully pondered on it the next day, when they were urging reluctant oxen through miry roads, or were ploughing their fields.

Now Choate, superior to Webster in quickness of apprehension and imagination, was an in-doors man. The larger portion of his mature life was passed in the stifling atmosphere of the courts, or in what Milton calls "the still air of delightful studies,"—that is, in his library. He of course was not so foolish as to neglect exercise; but his exercise was commonly confined to long walks through the streets or

around the Common of Boston. No one ever enjoyed Nature more intensely ; but he never sojourned with her. His friend Charles G. Loring, one of his competitors for the leadership of the Suffolk Bar, once invited him to pass a summer day at his beautiful residence on the Beverly shore. Mr. Choate was full of enthusiasm as he walked among the woodland paths, or gazed at the varying aspects of sky and ocean ; he doubtless stored up in his mind images of natural beauty which flashed out afterward in many a popular speech or legal argument. But in half-a-dozen hours he exhausted the capacity of the place to feed his eye and imagination. "My dear Loring," he said, in parting, "there has not been a twentieth part of a minute since I entered this terrestrial paradise that I have not enjoyed to the top of my bent ; but let me tell you that should you confine me here for a week, apart from my work and books, I know that I should die from utter *ennui*. You are fortunate in being able serenely to delight in it day after day." Now, this did not indicate any incapacity in Mr. Choate to take into his mind all that ocean and woodland scenery suggests, but simply his incapacity to dwell long upon what other less active and restless minds find to be a perpetual source of tranquil delight. In the fourth canto of "Childe Harold" Byron describes in immortal verse the architecture, the statues, the paintings, which make Rome a holy city to the artist and the poet. The stanzas devoted to St. Peter's Church, the Apollo Belvedere, the Venus

de Medici, the Dying Gladiator, not to mention others, are in the memories of all who visit Rome ; still, it is not remembered that Byron stayed in Rome only a few days, though in that brief period he did more than an ordinary man of talent could have done by residing there for years. Choate, in the same swift way, rapidly assimilated what he saw in a novel scene, and with a similar restlessness of brain hurried away to some new experience. He honored Webster as much as he could honor any man of his time ; still, if he had been asked to pass a fortnight with Webster at Marshfield or at his New Hampshire farm, and had accompanied him day after day in his shooting or fishing expeditions, not even Webster's conversation could have saved him from being devoured with an impatient desire to escape from the monotony of such an existence. All the eccentric *originals* of the neighborhood, whom Webster delighted in year after year, Choate would have delighted in for a day, and then dismissed them from his mind as intolerable bores ; the mountain or ocean scenery might have enthralled him for a few days more ; but the shooting and fishing, in which Webster took such pleasure, would have seemed to Choate a scandalous waste of time, which might have been more profitably bestowed on Æschylus and Aristophanes, on Thucydides and Tacitus, on Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, on Bacon and Burke, on Shakspeare and Milton. By the necessity of his mental constitution he could find no repose except in varying the direction of his intellectual



activity. The serenity of mind which comes from the calm contemplation or indolent enjoyment of Nature and country life he never obtained, while to Webster it was an habitual mood. Webster had leading and fixed ideas, which were inseparable from his individuality; through the mind of Choate a throng of ideas was constantly passing, pressing, and sometimes trampling on each other, but on account of their number and variety disturbing the process by which ideas settle into convictions and dominate will. It is hardly fanciful to assert that the permanent impression which Webster's ideas and rhetoric left on the politics and literature of the country was, in a considerable measure, due to his out-of-doors life and his talks with "uncultivated" natural men.

In one particular Choate excelled Webster, — that of constant, high-bred courtesy to men and women of all ranks. While pouring forth the treasures of his mind, he always had the art of disguising his own superiority by graceful subterfuges of expression, indicating that he was only recalling to the attention of his companion things, events, and thoughts which were in the memory of both. "You remember that fine passage in Southey;" "I need not remind you that Burke, on this point, says;" "You, of course, recollect Cicero's statement as to the problem in question;" "You have doubtless often felt the force of De Quincey's remark;" "You need not be reminded of that grand sentence in Hooker," — such were his ordinary ways of introducing allusions to



authors of note, whose works were lodged as securely in his brain as they were on the shelves of his library; and he always gave you new information by thus amiably intimating that you were already in possession of it. In familiar conversation he never put on the airs of a "superior intelligence;" he had a comic dislike of the grave, portentous, superserviceable bore who approached him with the notion that he was "the great Mr. Choate," and never appeared more happy than when his companions of a lower intellectual grade thought they were communicating knowledge to him, though they were in fact receiving it. Such entire absence of dogmatism and pretension, such tenderness for the feelings and respect for the opinions of others, I never witnessed in any other man of equal talents and accomplishments. Webster was generally charming when among his intimate friends, and ponderously condescending to comparative strangers, if he happened to be in good health and spirits; but in case he was sick or "disgruntled," or had his autumnal "hay fever," he put on a boorish "God-Almightiness," which had all the offensiveness of dignity without any of its majesty, and made him personally hateful to many politicians who were willing to admit the essential grandeur of his genius and character. Choate, on the other hand, whether in health or out of it, was always courteous; and I do not believe that any man ever met him in the street, in his house, or in his office, without being impressed by

the sweetness and serenity of his temper, and by that graciousness of manner which was the farthest possible remove from the insolent affability characteristic of the eminent "personage" who condescends to treat with elaborate politeness the humbler creature whom he admits, for the moment, to be a human being. Nothing could abate Choate's chivalric courtesy, not even his horror of bores. On one occasion I was present when a good man propounded to him a self-evident proposition, and, to support it, proceeded to state a considerable number of irrelevant facts, on which he founded a series of inconclusive arguments. The thermometer was 90° in the shade; Choate was physically exhausted by the labors of the forenoon, and required some more stimulating discourse to rouse him into attention; but he listened patiently to the end, and bowed his acquiescence to the foregone conclusion arrived at by an illogical process. When the bore departed, thankful that he had deposited an important truth which would bear fruit in his listener's mind, Mr. Choate turned to me, and remarked: "What an excellent person A. Y. Z. is! but don't you think he would be much better than he is if he could tell in a quarter of half a minute what he has consumed fifteen minutes in telling?" That remark was the only revenge he took for being robbed of his precious time. Webster would have growled the talker into silence at the end of his first sentence, or have contemptuously turned on his heel and left him to talk to himself. Choate was

incapable of offending the self-love of a benevolent ego-tist by any disrespect, even the disrespect of inattention to his tedious discourse. It is difficult to determine how many influential enemies Webster made by his surliness, especially when he had one of his attacks of the "hay fever." I remember one occasion when he came down from Boston to deliver a lecture on the framers of the Constitution to a city in ——— County, the leading personages of which were disposed to think of themselves as among the elect — the *élite*, perhaps the *effete* — of the earth. In the ante-room of the hall the mayor was busy in introducing the distinguished citizens of the place to the great man, who had an ominous thunder-cloud on his brow, and who shook hands with each prominent citizen as he came forward with a savage expression in his countenance, indicating that he would rather use his hands to inflict mortal injury on each of these persons than to clasp theirs in a spirit of amity and brotherhood. The cloud on his brow grew blacker and blacker, and the bolt flashed out just as a political opponent, of the reptile race of local politicians, came cringing and smiling toward him to say, "I am glad to see you, Mr. Webster." Webster contemptuously turned on his heel, and with his back to the purring, crawling, poisonous sycophant, gruffly exclaimed, "Enough of this, Mr. Mayor! let us go into the hall." Those who witnessed the rebuff can never forget the instant change in the face of the man who was thus disappointed in hav-

ing the honor to shake hands with the "Defender of the Constitution," the "godlike Dan." Mortification and rage were blended in the tones with which he whispered to another political opponent of Mr. Webster by his side: "Damn him! I always said, you know, that he was an enemy to his country!" Choate could never, under any circumstances, have been provoked into such an incivility. It may be added that Webster further expressed his sense of intolerable boredom by saying to the gentleman who was to follow his speech with the recitation of an original poem, "Are you familiar with this city? In my opinion 't is the dullest place on God's earth." It is plain that this is not the way by which a prominent statesman can acquire friends or conciliate enemies. Webster himself could never have been guilty of such manners to a farmer, or fisherman, or body-servant; but in his ugly moods he was capable of heaping any insult on a politician.

Mr. Choate, as the great Whig orator of Boston, was always called upon to address the monster meetings of the Boston Whigs when an important election was pending. Unless inflamed with the passion of the time, unless the question up for settlement was one which spontaneously inspired him, he considered this demand on the little leisure which his professional engagements allowed him an intolerable bore. On one occasion, when he was suffering from one of his attacks of bilious headache, he was almost dragged out of his bed and practically forced to go



down to Faneuil Hall and make a speech. I was among the crowd, and noticed, as he pressed through the seething, sweltering mass of citizens which obstructed his way to his allotted position on the platform, that his face looked weary and haggard, and that a strong odor of camphor followed him in his progress; but I also noticed, as he passed, that there was a humorously wicked look in his eyes, which indicated that he intended mischief to the chairman of the meeting, who had invaded the privacy of his chamber and insisted on his making a speech though he was palpably suffering from physical pain. My anticipation proved true. Nothing could be more splendid and inspiring than the oration as a whole; but he took every opportunity, in the pauses of his declamatory argument, to give a sly thrust at the chairman. The first sentence apprised all who were familiar with Choate's moods that mischief was brewing. "You, Mr. Chairman," he began, "called upon me last Thursday, and demanded that I should address the Whigs of Boston to-night. I respectfully informed you that, owing to ill-health and the pressure of my professional engagements, it was utterly impossible for me to be present on this occasion, and *accordingly here I am.*" This delicious *non sequitur* elicited roars of laughter and applause from three or four thousand people, and prepared them for what was to follow. Choate was determined to punish the chairman — one of the ablest men of business that Boston ever produced, but who knew



as little of Latin as of Cherokee—for forcing him into his irksome position. With this end in view, he took a malicious delight in hurling every now and then at the chairman long resounding sentences from Cicero, always prefacing them with an inimitable mock deference to the good merchant in the chair, as though, in familiarity with Latin learning, the able business man was infinitely superior to such a poor scholar as himself. The chairman had to smile blandly and nod his head in approval as every quotation from Cicero was shot at him in the most penetrating tones of the orator's magnetic voice. The mass of the audience did not at first take the joke. Indeed, the most ignorant people like to hear Latin, as the father of Charles, in Fletcher's play of "The Elder Brother," liked to hear Greek, for, he said, "It comes so thundering as 't would waken devils." The mere noise of the unintelligible language has an effect on the ear, though it conveys no sense to the mind; and Choate's citations from Cicero passed muster for about fifteen minutes before his pushing, swaying, clamorous, and delighted mob of auditors became aware of the exquisite pleasantry of prefacing every rolling, resounding Latin sentence with such remarks as these: "As you, Mr. Chairman, will remember;" "As you, Mr. Chairman, cannot forget;" "As you, Mr. Chairman, must have often recalled to your memory in the present strife of irreconcilable factions in this terrible crisis of our country;" but at last the full malicious fun of the

orator they were applauding became evident to their sense of humor. They knew that the chairman was as ignorant of the language of Cicero as they were, and they delighted in seeing him helplessly bending under the pitiless peltings of this linguistic storm. The shouts and acclamations with which they welcomed every point which Mr. Choate made in the English tongue were redoubled on every occasion when he solemnly turned to the chairman and capped his climax in magnificent Ciceronian Latin. The fun waxed more and more fast and furious; and when Mr. Choate, utterly exhausted, sat down, it seemed as if Faneuil Hall would rock to its foundations with the clappings of hands and the stampings of feet. The orator who had raised all this uproarious hubbub, declining all compliments, proceeded quietly to do what he always did after making a great effort, — that is, to invest his throat and lungs with voluminous wrappings, in order to protect them against the night air, — and then stalked out at a rapid pace to the peaceful chamber from which he had been unwarrantably drawn to serve a transient purpose of his party. The chairman of the meeting doubtless never afterward compelled Mr. Choate to make a speech against his will, unless he had previously devoted days and nights to the study of Cicero in Cicero's native tongue.

Perhaps the most notable of Mr. Choate's popular addresses was one delivered before the Democrats of Lowell, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1856, after

he had concluded to come out for Mr. Buchanan, the Democratic candidate for the Presidency. There were four or five thousand persons present eager to applaud the great Whig orator, who had been constrained to accept their candidate because he thought the Democratic party then stood, more emphatically than the party he left, for "the Union." The floor of the immense hall began to sink before the orator began to speak. It sank more and more as he proceeded in his discourse, and at the end of half an hour a sound was heard calculated to frighten the audience into a stampede for the doors,—a course which would have resulted in their destruction. Mr. B. F. Butler, who presided, told the audience to remain perfectly quiet while he went to discover if there were any cause for alarm. He found that the condition of the supports of the floor was such that the slightest demonstration of applause would be likely to bring the floor, the roof, and the walls of the building itself to the ground, and bury the audience in the ruins. He calmly returned to the platform, and as he passed Choate he whispered hoarsely in his ear, "We shall all be in——in five minutes." Then, with admirable *aplomb*, he told the crowd before him that there was no immediate danger if they slowly dispersed, but he considered it judicious to adjourn the meeting to another locality to hear the conclusion of Mr. Choate's speech. The post of danger, he added, was just under the platform, and that he and those with him on the platform would be the last to go out. As Choate

slowly walked by the side of Butler in the rear of the procession, thinking every moment that a dreadful catastrophe might occur, he still could not resist the temptation to indulge in a bit of humorous mischief at the expense of the politician and lawyer he had fought for so many years, and whispered to him: "Brother Butler, when you told me we should *all* be in five minutes in that locality unmentionable to ears polite, did you have the slightest idea of insinuating that both of us would go to the *same* place?" It may, however, be added that Mr. Butler probably saved, by his admirable coolness in that hour of peril, as many men as he was afterward the instrument of killing in his office of Major-General.

Many illustrations might be cited of Mr. Choate's insidious power over a jury, secret even to the twelve who were to render the verdict. One of these was furnished by a hard-headed, strong-hearted, well-educated farmer, who was one of a jury that gave five verdicts in succession for Choate's clients. The way he expressed his admiration of the great advocate was peculiar. It was in these words: "I understand, sir, that you are a relative of Mr. Choate. I must tell you that I did not think much of his flights of fancy; but I considered him a very *lucky* lawyer, for there was not one of those five cases that came before us where he was n't on the right side." This was said with the utmost simplicity, and without the remotest notion that an imaginative mind could exercise a subtle effect on a mind entirely unimaginative, through



that grand function of the imagination by which the person who has it enters into the interior recesses of natures which differ fundamentally from his own, and identifying himself for the moment with their individualities, extorts from them their well-considered "Yes."

But perhaps a stronger instance of Choate's method of concealing his power at the time he was exercising it with the most potent effect, occurred in an important case where the evidence was so conflicting and the points of law so intricate that dispassionate minds might have long paused before deciding the question in dispute. One resolute jurymen said to another, as he entered the "box," — "Now, mind you, there is one man in this crowd who will not give a verdict for the client of that man Choate. Why, sir, he is the great corrupter of juries. I know all his arts. He is engaged by fellows who wish to subvert justice between man and man. I hate him with my whole heart and soul." When the verdict was given for Choate's client, with hardly a discussion in the jury-room, the wonder was expressed that this obstinate member of the conclave agreed so readily with the rest. "Oh," he said, "the case was a plain one. Choate was right this time; and you know it would have been scandalous for me to violate justice because I had a prejudice against the person who supported it. Let him appear before us in a case where he is palpably wrong, as in the Tirrell trial or the Dalton trial, and I will show you that I'm all right. He never can humbug me!"



His power of lifting, of idealizing his clients, of making them the heroes or heroines of a domestic or sensational novel, was never more brilliantly illustrated than in the celebrated Tirrell trial, to which I have before alluded. Here were murder and arson, committed in a low brothel, as the subject of the picture or story; but a great artist—a sort of Yankee Spagnuolo or Victor Hugo—was suddenly improvised to paint or narrate the scene and incidents. The whole event was elevated into the domain of high tragedy. Those who listened to Mr. Choate's argument can never forget the strange kind of interest with which he invested the wild and "fast" young man and his stupid, drunken harlot. It was as if Albert Tirrell and Maria Bickford were on a par with Othello and Desdemona. Indeed, the advocate might have been supposed to hold a brief from Othello against a charge of murdering his wife. There are certain almost miraculous effects produced by the mere tone of voice with which a great advocate pronounces the simplest words. Thus when Choate said, "Albert *loved* Maria," the auditors felt the same kind of pity which they might have felt had Garrick or Kean uttered the words, "Othello loved Desdemona." It is considered a great merit in an actor's or orator's voice if, in pathetic passages, he has "tears in his tones;" but Choate in this instance had in his tones something which suggested the whole sad, horrible incidents of guilt and misery which it was his task to recount, and which resulted from the fatal attach-

ment of "Albert" to "Maria." There is no accurate report of his argument in this trial; and indeed if every word he spoke had been faithfully taken down, still his voice, his tones, the meaning he put into his utterance of some plain words, could not have been reported.

One incident of this trial afforded Mr. Choate an excellent opportunity of exerting his incomparable power of ridiculing what he might find it difficult to dispose of by reasoning. Roxbury is but four miles from Boston, and is now, indeed, incorporated with the city proper. After the evidence for the defence was all in, and the arguments were to begin, the prosecuting attorney brought forward a resident of Roxbury to give additional evidence against Tirrell. Choate's method of demolishing the effect of what this witness had to say is among the cherished traditions of the Suffolk Bar. "Where was this tardy and belated witness, that he comes here to tell us all he knows, and all he doesn't know, forty-eight hours after the evidence for the defence is closed? Is the case so obscure that he never heard of it? Was he ill or in custody? Was he in Europe, Asia, or Africa? Was he on the Red Sea, or the Yellow Sea, or the Black Sea, or the Mediterranean Sea? . . . No, gentlemen, he was at none of these places (comparatively easy of access), but — and I would call your attention, Mr. Foreman, to the fact, and urge it upon your attention — he was at that more remote, more inaccessible region, whence so few travellers return — Roxbury!"

One of the greatest of Webster's arguments was that on the trial of the Knapps for the murder of Mr. White, of Salem. It is now generally conceded that as the law of Massachusetts stood at the time, John Francis Knapp was illegally convicted. So far as the technical law was concerned, he was as innocent as any peaceful citizen who walked the streets of Salem. His guilt was plain, but he was not legally guilty; and it was only by Webster's overmastering hold on the minds and consciences of the jury that they rendered a verdict equitably just, but legally wrong. At the time of the trial Mr. Choate was a young lawyer, engaged in doing some minor services to the leading counsel who appeared for the prosecution. Had he been then the man who saved Tirrell from being illegally hanged, and had been counsel for John Francis Knapp, there can be little doubt that, with the law on his side, he would have been more than a match for Webster. It is curious that what is called "Lynch law" is sometimes conducted under all the solemn forms of regulated courts of justice. That it was not exercised in the Tirrell case was owing to Rufus Choate.

The effect of Choate's oratory was aided by the strength of expression he could throw into his face. "Why," said an old farmer, listening to an argument directed against his own interests, — "why, that fellow can *cant* his countenance so as to draw the tears out of your eyes." He also had a singular power of so changing the tone of his voice, that, in conversing

gravely with one person, he could throw in an "aside" to another which was audible to the latter alone. On one occasion two members of a legal firm called upon him in order to suggest the naming of a day for consultation on an important case in which he was engaged as leading counsel. He happened at the time to be overwhelmed with business, and hastily remarked that the only hours he had to spare within a week were after five o'clock in the afternoon of the ensuing day. That day was Sunday. The senior member of the firm, with a slight Pharisaical sniff meant to indicate a superior scrupulosity in the matter of ceremonial piety, solemnly replied: "Mr. Choate, I have been for thirty years a member of the Bar, but my conscience has forbidden me ever to transact any worldly business on the Sabbath." Choate himself was in religious matters a Calvinist of the austere type. He gave one glance at the reprover of his sacrilegious proposal, — a glance which penetrated to the inmost depths of the little pettifogging soul that wriggled plainly to his eye under its mere crust of religious formality, — and gravely remarked: "You know, Mr. A——, this cause is peculiarly one which falls under that class of cases somewhere, I think, mentioned in Scripture, which concerns the doing of good on the Lord's Day; but I honor your scruples so much that I would not for the world ask you to do violence to them." The conclusion of this address was accompanied with a wave of his hand which brought it for a few moments before his mouth; and the junior part-



ner caught these words: "He's an infernal fool; you come." How this swift, significant command entered his ears without getting into those of his senior, the young man could never understand, as the three were only a few feet apart during the short conference. Meanwhile the oracular teacher of the proprieties of religion moved pompously out of the office, fully impressed with the idea that he had risen amazingly in the estimation of the great Mr. Choate by his conscientious refusal to perform a duty of justice and mercy on what he erroneously called the "Sabbath." The only departure from literal fact in the narration of this anecdote is in substituting the milder adjective "infernal" for the stronger one impatiently used by Mr. Choate in qualifying the noun "fool."

In alluding to Mr. Choate's imaginative power of transforming himself into the personalities of his clients, of surveying acts and incidents from their point of view, I have expressed my wonder that he could so quickly relieve himself of the burden he carried when the cause was decided against him. Byron, for instance, is an example of intense genius, with sensibility so blended with imagination that the type of human nature he adopted as the fit vehicle for the expression of his ideas on human life dominated at last his own individuality. The type he adopted was the misanthropical type of our immensely various humanity. He dashed into it; but the trouble with him was that when his genius got *in* to this form of individual character, it could not get *out*. Hence the



monotony of his splendid poetry. Shakspeare, in his drama of "Timon of Athens," went deeper into the spiritual sources of misanthropy than even Byron did, and expressed the imaginative experience he gained by it in passages of more dreadful scorn and hatred of ordinary men and women than Byron ever dreamed of uttering; but, unlike Byron, he found no difficulty in escaping from the mental mood which engrossed him for the time, and passed on to enter into and reproduce other forms of character representing more healthy and joyous perceptions of human life. Now Choate, with much of Byron's intensity, had more of Shakspeare's comprehensiveness. The self-abandonment by which he seemingly became a person entirely different from himself, in identifying himself with his client, was accompanied by an admirable power of self-direction, which enabled him easily to escape from his transient metamorphosis. He not only could go *in*, but could get *out* of, every individuality he assumed for the time. And this flexibility of mind was not necessarily a violation of intellectual conscientiousness. It simply shed light on the case in dispute by bringing in individual character as a factor in settling a complicated case of right or wrong. But, at all events, Mr. Choate cleared his mind of all the vexations of a jury trial after the decision had been made. "I sometimes feel," he remarked to a legal friend, "when a case has gone against me, like the Baptist minister who was baptizing in winter a crowd of converts through a large hole made in the ice.

One brother — Jones, I think — disappeared after immersion, and did not re-appear; probably drifted ten or fifteen feet from the hole, and was vainly gasping under ice as many inches thick. After pausing a few minutes, the minister said, ‘Brother Jones has evidently gone to kingdom come: bring on the next.’ Now, I am not unfeeling; but after all has been done for a client that I could do, — and I never spared myself in advocating his legal rights, — the only thing left for me is to dismiss the case from my mind, and to say with my Baptist brother, ‘Bring on the next.’”

That this habit of mind was entirely disconnected from any languid abandonment of the cause of his client while there was the slightest hope of saving him, is humorously shown in a letter which Professor Brown publishes in his biography, relating to a cause decided against his clients by the Supreme Court at Washington. “The court,” he wrote to the Washington lawyer engaged with him in the cause, “has lost its little wits. Please let me have (1) our brief — for the law; (2) the defendant’s brief — for the sophistry; (3) the opinion — for the foolishness; and never say die.” The august Supreme Court of the United States, which Choate was accustomed publicly to celebrate as the perfection of wisdom and equity, was never so disrespectfully treated as in this deliciously impudent private letter. The humor of it could hardly have been exceeded by Swift, Sterne, or Sydney Smith.

Of the extravagance of this humor let me give some instances. Thus, Mr. C——— was distinguished among all the able leaders of the Suffolk Bar for his strict attention to the interests of his clients, for his attendance at a consultation at the exact minute appointed, for the gravity of his behavior and life in every respect, and especially for his rigorous observance of office hours. In fact, he was the very incarnation of Boston respectability. On one occasion, when he was solemnly conferring with the directors of a great corporation on a pending suit, Mr. Choate darted into the room, exclaiming: "Well, Mr. C———, I am glad to find you in your office for *once*. Do you know that for the past forty-eight hours I have hunted for you day *and* night through every theatre, bar-room, and dance-hall in Boston, without getting a sight of you? I desire a consultation in the case of —— and ——; and now I have at last discovered you, after my long search, I shall insist on an interview." The delicious incongruity of the charge with Mr. C———'s character, he being known as the most punctual, punctilious, and decorous of Boston mankind, raised a roar of laughter from the business men present; and tradition obscurely hints — though this is of doubtful authenticity — that even Mr. C——— smiled.

On the morning after Charles Sumner's Fourth of July oration on "The True Grandeur of Nations," there naturally gathered at his office in Court Street a crowd of approvers and disapprovers of his extreme

views of the policy and duty of peace. Professor Lieber, among others, was there, and I remember the earnestness with which he assailed Sumner on the ground that his abstract principles degraded from their intrinsic dignity all the great battle-fields of freedom. Sumner was evidently annoyed, but could only get in here and there a palliating word in the rush of Lieber's indignant eloquence. "Do you tell me, my dear Sumner," he shouted, "that I must give up Thermopylæ and Marathon and Sempach?" Then Choate, whose office was on the same floor, suddenly dashed into the room, adding: "And Waterloo! Come, Lieber, to my den; don't bother Sumner any more. I have something to discuss with you; and we'll fight it out, yard-arm to yard-arm, to your heart's content. Our dear Charles will be sufficiently punished for his heresies on military glory by less redoubtable antagonists than you. Come along, I say!" And he half coaxed, half dragged, the impassioned Lieber from Sumner's office into his own, though the great publicist had only begun the harangue he intended to address to his friend. I never witnessed a more comical scene. Even Sumner, irritated and harassed as he was, joined in the general laughter at the success of Choate's flank movement to protect him from the disastrous effects of Lieber's direct assault.

There are so many traditions of Choate's wit and humor that the task of selection is difficult. Thus, on his first election to the national House of Repre-



sentatives he was once asked by a lady why Mrs. Choate did not accompany him to Washington. "I assure you, Madam," he replied, "that I have spared no pains to induce her to come. I have even offered to pay half her expenses." Then there is his remark on John Quincy Adams's relentlessness as a debater. "He had," said Choate, "an instinct for the jugular and the carotid artery as unerring as that of any carnivorous animal." Of a lawyer who was known to be as contentious as he was dull-witted he said, "He's a bull-dog, with confused ideas." While arguing a case he took a position which appeared to be equitable; but the court demanded that he should find a precedent for it. "I will look, your Honor, and endeavor to find a precedent, if you require it; though it would seem to be a pity that the court should lose the honor of being the first to establish so just a rule." Of an ugly artist who had painted a portrait of himself he declared, as though he were paying a compliment to the skill of the painter, that "it is a *flagrant* likeness." When he met the Rev. W. R. Alger, shortly after the latter had sent him a copy of his "Poetry of the East," he remarked, with a felicitous combination of wit and wisdom: "The Orientals seem to be amply competent to metaphysics, wonderfully competent to poetry, scarcely competent to virtue, utterly incompetent to liberty." He was once engaged as leading counsel in an important mercantile case. The jury was composed mostly of farmers and drovers drawn from the west-



ern part of Massachusetts, and it was feared that they would hardly be capable of doing justice to the merits of a complicated commercial transaction, the very phrases and figures of which they were necessarily incompetent to comprehend. His anxious client, just before the trial began, asked him what he thought would be the verdict. "Oh," he replied, "the law on our side is as strong as thunder, but"—with a slight shrug of his shoulders—"what those bovine and bucolical gentlemen from Berkshire may say, God only knows!" It is my impression, however, that in spite of the difficulties he encountered he won the verdict.

Much has been said of Mr. Choate's handwriting. It was always the favorite jest of the Suffolk Bar. A genius akin to that of Young or Champollion would be required to decipher his briefs. Yet with his eye on his brief, Mr. Choate never hesitated for a word in making a statement in which every word used was significant and important. Everybody who has attended a jury trial knows that the best advocates often pause in their exposition of their case, and indulge in that hateful sound which may be expressed in letters in this way: "*err, err, err.*" That sound tends to kill the effect of all eloquence. To be sure, we are told that "to *err* is human;" but when an orator indulges in that interruption of the stream of his talk, we feel, in closing the quotation, that it is indeed "divine" to "forgive." The short-hand which Mr. Choate used, though undecipherable by any other

human intelligence, never left him at a loss for the exact word, even in legal arguments before an assembly of jurists; and he never "err-err-erred."

Mr. George Ticknor, the historian of Spanish literature, was once called as a witness in a case in which Mr. Choate was engaged. After his examination he sat by the side of the eminent counsellor within the bar. He was attracted by the notes which Mr. Choate had made of the evidence, and remarked to him that the handwriting reminded him of two autograph letters in his possession,—one of Manuel the Great of Portugal (dated 1512), and another of Gonsalvo de Cordova, the great captain, written a few years earlier. Nobody who has looked over such collections as those of Mr. Ticknor or Mr. Prescott can refrain from feeling a sensation of wonder that any sense can be elicited from such seemingly unintelligible scrawls. "These letters," said Mr. Ticknor to Mr. Choate, "were written three hundred and fifty years ago, and they strongly resemble your notes of the present trial." Choate, with that droll, quizzical expression which lent such humor to his face, instantly replied: "Remarkable men, no doubt; they seem to have been much in advance of their time." How delicious this is! the quiet assumption that the infallible sign of advance in chirography is to make handwriting more undecipherable than Egyptian hieroglyphics! It may here be stated that one of the most charming addresses he ever prepared for lyceums was a lecture on the "Romance of the Sea." Those who heard it

forty years ago now speak of it as a masterpiece of eloquence ; it enjoyed a popularity similar to that of Wendell Phillips's lecture on "The Lost Arts : " all who listened to it were clamorous to see it in print. The manuscript, however, was stolen by some literary rogue, who probably conceived he might make a modest yearly income by delivering it in remote country towns to which its reputation had not extended. One can imagine his consternation when he found that he could not decipher a word of the manuscript ; that he had wickedly come into possession of a treasure belonging to that description of lost property which is commonly advertised as of no value except to its owner.

It is sad, in reviewing a career like that of Mr. Choate, to see on how frail a foundation rests the reputation of a great lawyer and advocate, unless he becomes connected here and there with causes that assume historic importance. Erskine, a man whose natural powers were much below Choate's, owes his eminent position to his advocacy of certain persons who were in danger of being convicted of high treason at that miserable period in English history (the last six years of the eighteenth century) when the administration of the younger Pitt, commanding an immense majority in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, seemed bent on depriving the English people of the right of free speech, and of the right of associating to protest against abuses in government, and to petition for their removal. The

greatness of Erskine is due to his success in making a jury of twelve men, as in his defence of Hardy, in 1794, overturn the tyrannical projects of King, Lords, and Commons. The men marked out by the ministry to be hanged, drawn, and quartered for high treason were saved by his skill and eloquence, and the liberal principles of the English Constitution vindicated against every department of the English government, including the judicial. There is no other example in history where one man has so influenced twelve other men as to make them nullify the laws of a constitutional government, of which every department was against both him and them. So unmistakably was the popular spirit indicated by juries directed by Erskine, that the Government found itself in the dilemma of being compelled to abolish trial by jury altogether, or to abandon its doctrine of constructive treason. Erskine thus comes into an important period of English history as an eminent force, fully equal to the great Mr. Pitt, inasmuch as he prevented the execution of the worst measures of the Government. Still, as a debater in the House of Commons, Erskine made no figure at all; and the great majority of his arguments at the Bar, however successful in private causes, are forgotten.

Now, Choate never had a similar opportunity to become historical by successfully vindicating before the courts a precious principle of liberty which the courts were inclined to repudiate. The causes in which he was engaged were private, not public causes, and the



great powers he exhibited in conducting them have left no record in history or literature. In his private diary he frequently mentions the unsatisfactoriness of all the fleeting reputation gained by his political speeches and legal arguments. At one time he conceived the idea of writing a series of essays, in which he could set down the results of his wide extra-professional reading and thinking. The volume was to be called "The Lawyer's Vacations." He even went so far as to tell his friend Judge Warren that he intended to write such a book. "How far have you got in it?" asked the judge. "Well," Choate replied, "I've got as far as the titlepage and a motto. The title is 'The Lawyer's Vacations;' the motto I've forgotten. But I shall show that the lawyer's vacation is the space between the question put to a witness and his answer." And, in fact, such was hardly an exaggerated representation of the vacation that Choate allowed himself.

But suppose that some kind genius at the time when Choate had arrived at the age of forty had showered upon him an independent fortune. He was then in the possession of robust health, and his mind was in the fulness of its strength and fertility. Retiring from the practice of the law, his insatiable intellectual activity would have sought some subject or subjects on which it might be profitably exercised. My impression is that he would have selected a great historical epoch in the Old World, or perhaps fastened his attention on the annals of New England. All his



knowledge of law, all his experience at the Bar, all his acquired skill in analyzing evidence, would have been devoted to his theme. His masterly reasoning power, his capacity for large generalizations, would have been employed on a vast multitude of disconnected facts, which he would have investigated with the zeal of an antiquary, and assimilated, disposed, and combined with the skill of an artist and the sagacity of a thinker. Every philosophy of history, from Vico's to Hegel's, he would have read and digested. Being free from all calls upon his time preferred by importunate suitors, his mind would have soon gained a grand repose, without losing any of its healthy vigor. When he had obtained all the materials necessary for the foundation of his history, there can be no doubt that his narrative would have possessed an interest and fascination which would charm alike the scholar and the ordinary reader; for the whole representation would be alive. The individuals and events of past ages would have been made as real as the friends we daily accost in the streets or the incidents which actually pass before our eyes. His imagination would have brooded over his generalized facts, vitalizing all it touched; not a character would have been allowed to appear on his page as a mere name; and then what wit, what humor, what bright fancy, what ingenious phrases, what happy epithets would have aided to give variety to the generally sustained march of the style! He would, I think, have excelled Prescott, Irving, Bancroft, Palfrey,

and Motley ; for, without any disrespect to those eminent historians, he was intrinsically more richly gifted than any of them. But it was not allowed to Mr. Choate to exhibit his rare faculties except under the spur of continually succeeding occasions. So far as the literature of the country is concerned, he has left on it no appreciable mark of his literary powers, though in Professor Brown's two volumes there will be found some splendid specimens of his logic and rhetoric, of his learning and his command of the resources of the English language, which would do credit to our best prose writers. It is the old irony of fate. Nature liberally bestowed on this man some of the finest and noblest qualities, which she is generally so niggardly in intrusting to her children,—vivid imagination, vigorous intelligence, quickness of perception, capacity for unintermitted, self-rewarding toil ; wit, humor, a genial disposition ; an intense love for the beautiful and good ; an instinctive attraction for the higher things of the mind ; a heroic sentiment which recognized the slightest manifestation of heroism in the humblest of mankind and womankind, and which kindled into rapture when it contemplated and communed with the grand heroic spirits which illuminate history ; a practical sagacity which prevented enthusiasm from obscuring the teachings of sober judgment ; a heart overflowing with beneficence and good-will to all human beings ; a brain teeming with facts, ideas, and images, incapable of pausing in its creative activity, and finding its repose only in

a variation of the objects to which its activity was directed. And we can conceive of the old grand Dame muttering, as she accomplished her work: "Well, you fools have long been waiting for a man of genius to offset the commonplace creatures I ordinarily fashion to do their work in this miserable world: here he is!" Then we may conceive of Circumstance, the god of this lower world, stepping in and declaring that this favorite of Nature shall not be a great poet, or a great historian, or a great political philosopher, but shall exercise his genius on perishable topics, and be defrauded of his right to attain the permanent fame which men less endowed easily accomplish. He shall scatter his native gifts in a thousand ways; delight everybody he meets in a chance conversation with the abundant wealth of his intellect and wit; thrill popular assemblies by occasional orations which leave no record beyond the hour; captivate senates with an eloquence which is connected with no measure he has himself originated; be allowed some few hours in a week to commune with Greek and Latin poets, historians, and philosophers, whom he aches to emulate, but whom he shall have hardly the leisure to translate; and shall be compelled to toil for his daily bread in courts of law, where his magnificent abilities shall be acknowledged and rewarded, but the results of which shall have no place on the memory of mankind. Such was Choate's fate. Circumstance controlled Nature. Everybody who knew him, everybody who listened to him,

whether young men of letters or grave judges, felt that a strange original genius had somehow dropped down into our somewhat prosaic New England, had done his life-work in a wonderfully meteoric way, and had vanished from us suddenly, without leaving on our politics or literature the abiding impression which his genius seemed so capable of impressing on both. That he was one of the most remarkable men our country has produced is beyond doubt; but it is difficult for those who knew him to convey to a younger generation, which never passed "under the wand of the magician," the effect he produced on their own minds and hearts.

Mr. Choate, in his published writings, suffers much from the necessary divorce between his style and the inflections of his voice. His Dartmouth oration on Webster is among the manuscripts in the Boston Public Library, and it appears to the eye a mere chaos of indecipherable words, sprinkled with semicolons and colons, relieved here and there by fierce dashes of the pen, indicating a pause between the comma and the semicolon. It contains also the longest sentence ever written by man since Cadmus invented letters. His penmanship was so bad that when he wrote an important note to Daniel Webster, touching the refusal of the Boston city government to grant Faneuil Hall for a meeting of the supporters of the 7th of March speech, Mr. Webster could not make out the meaning of a single word. "Tell Choate," said Webster to Mr. Harvey, "that his handwriting is

barbarous ; that he should go to a writing-school and take a quarter's lessons. He gives me advice as to what it is proper for me to do, and I cannot understand one of his infernal hieroglyphics."

The peculiarity of Choate's written style was this, that it required the inflections of his voice to make it as clear and flowing as it came from his own mind. I would venture to undertake the reading of the most formidable sentence in his eulogy on Webster, and by merely imitating his tones prove that the style was as lucid and exact as it was kindling and expansive. In view of the number of his adjectives as contrasted with the meagreness of his nouns, it was said of him that he "drove a substantive and six." Yet he put meaning into every one of his adjectives, and was really the least verbose of impassioned orators. His epithets always stood for things, each adjective describing, qualifying, modifying, or emphasizing the main idea he desired to convey. In Fletcher's "Two Noble Kinsmen," Arcite says, —

"We felt our fiery horses  
Like proud seas under us."

In driving his perilous team of "a substantive and six," Mr. Choate partook in this grand elation of conscious genius ; gloried in urging on his fiery steeds in headlong haste to their appointed goal, and came in at the end of the race flushed, it may be, and breathless, but still victorious over all competitors. He never met at the Bar anybody who could match him



in fearlessly driving that "substantive and six" in the legal "Olympian games." In his case, Pindar directed the chariot as well as sung the triumphs of the race.

It is to be remarked that Choate's real emphasis was in the lower note of his flexible voice. His substantive came in quietly after an ascending scale of adjectives, the last uttered in the loudest tone he could command. Thus, in the well-known caricature of his method in a supposed legal controversy as to whether the second-hand harness of his client was worth a sixpence, he is reported as saying: "To be sure, gentlemen of the jury, this was not a harness distinguishable by the meretricious gloss and glitter calculated to catch the eye of the vulgar crowd; but I will put it to you as citizens and as men whether it was n't a *safe*, SOUND, SUBSTANTIAL, SECOND-HAND harness." The substantive "harness" in this connection was, as it were, dropped in as a seemingly unimportant word; but as he pronounced it, without any physical emphasis, it became all the more mentally emphatic. This peculiarity pervaded all his spoken eloquence; the high, the almost screaming tone with which he uttered his last smiting adjective subsided in a second to the deep, intense, quiet utterance of the noun.

I am strongly tempted, in conclusion, to imitate one of his long sentences in summing up my impression of his intellectual character. Suppose I put it in this way: "He was endowed by Nature with a will singularly vigorous and a mind eminently plastic;

and this combination of force and fluency, this combination by which self-direction is never lost in all the fervors of seeming self-abandonment, the flexible intellect flowing into all the multitudinous moulds which the various exigencies of the case may demand,— now this, now that; homely, if need be, clad in the ‘russet gray’ of the peasant, and anon doffing the imperial robes and putting on the regal crown; everywhere and in every situation equal, just equal, to the claims of the occasion; never faltering in any of the Protean shapes it pleased him to assume, but always strong, always earnest, always determined to carry to its ultimate the uppermost conception glowing in his ever-fertile brain; now jesting, now reasoning, but whether jesting or reasoning, never losing sight of his purpose to persuade, to convince, to *overpower* the persons he was to influence; contracting or expanding his mind with equal ease, so that it resembled the fabled tent of the Oriental prince, which might be so condensed as to become a mere toy for a lady’s finger, and then again so spread out that armies might repose under its grateful shade; gifted with wit, humor, fancy, imagination, passion, understanding; immensely acquisitive as well as inquisitive of knowledge; tireless in industry, so that it could be said of him, as Coke said of Raleigh, that he could ‘toil terribly;’ facing the most abstruse problems of law with an intrepidity of intellect which no difficulties could daunt, and no obscurity perplex; fearless in grappling with opposition, whether the opposition came in the sub-

stance of a man or in the spectre of an idea ; so imperturbably serene at the centre of his being, that in the very tempest and whirlwind of his eloquence he never lost the admirable poise of his nature, nor the fine discretion which makes eloquence efficient for its intended purpose : this man stands before us a wonderful example of the impulses and capacities of genius, — of genius ever attended by that reason which looks before and after ; by that learning without which reasoning is but an idle exercise, an abundant agitation of wit on matter so slight as to do no justice to the powers it so sparsely feeds with facts, — facts without which the logic of Aristotle himself would be but an ingenious delusion and a pleasing snare ; something that the poet has indicated in that fine line —

‘Ne subtler web Arachne cannot spin ;’

and, yet more, with Reason and Learning, having for their constant companion Imagination, with ‘his garland and singing robes about him,’ decorating, enlivening, penetrating, vitalizing the argument and the facts, so that the logic becomes as beautiful as ‘a golden exhalation of the dawn,’ and we watch its processes as we would that of an army marching to assured victory, with all its banners flaming in the consenting and joyous air : with all these powers working in glad harmony together, each assisting the other, each knowing its place, each instinctively conscious when it should be master or servant, and each seemingly unfettered in its own spontaneous move-

ment,—to all these powers and accomplishments, I say, he added the great tidal wave of passion, impelling, hurrying everything onward that it caught in its tyrannous sweep, and leaving but wrecks on the opposing shore, where it broke in iridescent spray and foam.”

This is, of course, little better than a caricature of the way in which Mr. Choate grappled with the difficulties of the long sentence,—the sentence of Hooker, Milton, Clarendon, and De Quincey; but still, if it were read by anybody who could imitate the inflections of Mr. Choate’s voice, and thus indicate the natural way in which every stated thought or fact suggests something which modifies or enforces it, and the accumulating process goes on to the point where it rhythmically closes, I think my feeble imitation would present little to puzzle the grammarian or perplex the minds of ordinary men. The fact that juries and popular audiences had no trouble in getting at his meaning proves that his long sentences were lucid, however obscure they may appear to the eye as read in the mangled reproductions of reporters. Oh, if the inflections of his voice could be printed! Then it would be shown that the soul of the man threaded every intricacy of the complicated sentence, delicately noting each variation of the dominant thought, and vitalizing the whole with its kindling inspiration. I have listened to some of the arguments and addresses in which he exhibited this mastery of the resources of the English language, making words his “servile

instruments," and forcing everything to bend to his will, — syntax, it may be said, among the rest, — when he inevitably brought to my mind the glorious image in which Charles Lamb celebrates the rising of the sun, —

“ To see the sun to bed, and to arise,  
Like some hot amorist, with glowing eyes,  
Bursting the lazy bonds of sleep that bound him,  
With all his fires and travelling glories round him.”



## RECOLLECTIONS OF AGASSIZ.

IN the commerce of nations it is important that there should be an interchange of minds as well as of merchandise. In the annual reports of our Secretaries of the Treasury the imports and exports are correctly given in the current coin or currency of the land, and the balance of trade, either for or against us, is correctly estimated ; but in stating the value of our imports there is an unavoidable omission of our annual importations of skilled laborers, of inventors, of engineers, and of men of genius generally in the various departments of art, literature, and science. The worth of such men cannot be gleaned from the records of the Custom House ; yet it is plain that they must add enormously to the wealth of the country by simply diffusing their exceptional knowledge or exercising their exceptional talents. Indeed, there can be no imported wealth which exceeds in value the importation of the creators of wealth. The body which contains an ingenious and inventive mind may not be equal in bulk to a single case of goods which comes over in the same ship with it ; but if the mind lodged in the body be that of a Watt, an Arkwright, or a Bessemer, it is impossible to compute the number

of the fleets that may be needed to export the products of his brain. Even in the matter of pure science, it is difficult to estimate the value in dollars and cents of an imported man of science of the first class. He may seem to scorn all applications of his discoveries to useful ends; but it is certain that a crowd of bright, practical minds will follow in the path of his discoveries, and convert all his additions to the knowledge of Nature into additional means for the conquest of Nature.

At any rate, there can be no doubt that the vessel which brought Louis Agassiz to our shores brought a scientific intelligence and scientific force which out-valued not only all the rest of the cargo, but of a thousand ordinary cargoes. In getting thorough possession of him, in making him an American citizen, and in resolutely refusing, with his hearty concurrence, to deliver him up to the country which afterward claimed his services, the United States must be considered to have made a good bargain. He was too poor when he arrived here to pay any "duties" into the Treasury; but the impulse he gave to science in this country enriched us in a degree that cannot be measured by any money standard. Indeed, the American opponents of his scientific theories were and are among the foremost to acknowledge the marvellous effects of his scientific inspiration; for he popularized pure science, and lifted high in public esteem the whole body of investigators who were loyally engaged in its service. From him came the most notable of

all the maxims which illustrate the disinterestedness of the chivalry of science. At the time he was absorbed in some minute investigations in a difficult department of zoölogy, he received a letter from the president of a lyceum at the West, offering him a large sum for a course of popular lectures on natural history. His answer was: "I CANNOT AFFORD TO WASTE MY TIME IN MAKING MONEY." The words deserve to be printed in capitals; but Agassiz was innocently surprised that a sentiment very natural to him should have excited so much comment. He knew that scores of his brother scientists, American and European, would have used the words "afford" and "waste" in the same sense, had they been similarly interrupted in an investigation which promised to yield them a new fact or principle. Still, the announcement from such an authority that there was a body of men in the United States who could not *afford* to *waste* time in making money had an immense effect. It convinced thousands of intelligent and opulent men of business, who had never before thought a moment of time devoted to the making of money could be wasted, that science meant something; and it made them liberal of their money when it was asked for scientific purposes. It did even more than this,—it made them honor the men who were placed above the motives by which they themselves were ordinarily influenced.

My first impression of the genius of Agassiz was

gained when he was in the full vigor of his mental and physical powers. Some thirty-five years ago, at a meeting of a literary and scientific club of which I happened to be a member, a discussion sprang up concerning Dr. Hitchcock's book on "bird-tracks," and plates were exhibited representing his geological discoveries. After much time had been consumed in describing the bird-tracks as isolated phenomena, and in lavishing compliments on Dr. Hitchcock, a man suddenly rose who in five minutes dominated the whole assembly. He was, he said, much interested in the specimens before them, and he would add that he thought highly of Dr. Hitchcock's book, as far as it accurately described the curious and interesting facts he had unearthed; but, he added, the defect in Dr. Hitchcock's volume is this, that "it is *dees-creep-teeve*, and not *com-par-a-teeve*." It was evident throughout that the native language of the critic was French, and that he found some difficulty in forcing his thoughts into English words; but I never can forget the intense emphasis he put on the words "descriptive" and "comparative," and by this emphasis flashing into the minds of the whole company the difference between an enumeration of strange, unexplained facts and the same facts as interpreted and put into relation with other facts more generally known. The moment he contrasted "*dees-creep-teeve*" with "*com-par-a-teeve*," one felt the vast gulf that yawned between mere scientific observation and scientific intelligence, between eyesight and insight, between

minds that doggedly perceive and describe and minds that instinctively compare and combine. The speaker vehemently expressed his astonishment that a scientist could observe such phenomena and yet feel no impulse to bring them into relation to other facts and laws scientifically established. The critic was, of course, Agassiz, then in the full possession of all his exceptional powers of body and mind. You could not look at him without feeling that you were in the presence of a magnificent specimen of physical, mental, and moral manhood; that in him was realized Sainte-Beuve's ideal of a scientist, — "the soul of a sage in the body of an athlete." At that time he was one of the comeliest of men. His full and ruddy face, glowing with health and animation, was crowned by a brow which seemed to be the fit home for such a comprehensive intelligence; and the slight difficulty he overcame in enunciating English words only lent to them increased significance. He gave the impression that every word he uttered embodied a fact or a principle. Afterward he so adapted his organs of speech to the English language, that he ended in speaking and writing it as though it were his mother-tongue. If there was any exception to be made, it was in one of his favorite terms, "development." He never completely overcame his tendency to pronounce it "devil-opement."

It was my good fortune to meet him often during the last twenty-five years of his life; but my first impression — the impression of the comprehensiveness of



his mind — was more and more confirmed as I came to know him more intimately. All the facts and principles of his special science were systematized in his vast and joyous memory, so that he was ever ready to reply to any unexpected question concerning the most obscure nooks and corners of natural history; but in replying, he ever indicated that his immense grasp of the details of his science was free from any disposition to exaggerate any detail out of its connections. No isolated fact could exist in his mind. The moment it was apprehended, it fell easily into relationship to the throng of other facts quietly stored in his broad intelligence, and became one of a group which illustrated a principle. His knowledge of particulars was extensive, minute, and accurate. Every separate fact was vividly present to the eye of his imagination, and yet all his knowledge was generalized knowledge. In thinking therefore on his accumulated, his multitudinous materials, it may be said that details were never in his way or out of his way: those that he needed crowded at once upon his mind; those he did not need kept at a respectful distance. I often watched the operations of his intellect when he was unexpectedly drawn into a discussion, but I never could detect any sign of that confusion of mind which results from a disturbance of the proper relations of memory to understanding. The facts he needed, as I have said, came at once to do his bidding; and the thousands of irrelative facts which were also at his command never obtruded on his attention to

obstruct the rapid course of his lucid argument. It would seem as if there never was among naturalists an intellect more thoroughly disciplined than his, or which was less hampered by the abundance of the material on which it worked.

But the marvel of Agassiz, and a never-ceasing source of wonder and delight to his friends and companions, was the union in his individuality of this solidity, breadth, and depth of mind with a joyousness of spirit, an immense overwhelming geniality of disposition, which flooded every company he entered with the wealth of his own opulent nature. Placed at the head of a table, with a shoulder of mutton before him, he so carved the meat that every guest was flattered into the belief that the host had given him the best piece. His social power exceeded that of the most brilliant conversationists and of the most delicate epicures; for he was not only fertile in thoughts, but wise in wines and infallible in matters of fish and game. It was impossible to place him in any company where he was out of place. The human nature *in* him fell into instinctive relations with every kind and variety of human nature outside of him. His wide experience of life had brought him into familiar contact with emperors, kings, and nobles, with scientists and men of letters, with mechanics, farmers, and day-laborers,—in short, with men divided by race, rank, wealth, and every other distinction from other men; and by the felicity of his cosmopolitan nature he placed himself on an easy equality with them all,—

never cringing to those conventionally above him, never "condescending" to those intellectually below him, but cordially welcoming everybody he met on the common ground of human brotherhood. Himself a strong man, his test of manhood was entirely independent of conventional rules. When he discovered a real *man*, it was indifferent to him whether he occupied a palace or a hovel; and certainly no man of science ever equalled him in captivating the representatives of all grades of rank and intelligence by sheer force of human sympathy. The French, or Austrian, or Brazilian emperor, the peasant of the Alps, the "rough" of our Western plains, agreed at least in one opinion,—that Agassiz was a grand specimen of manhood. His scientific contemporaries, though brought into occasional antagonism with his opinions, admitted that he possessed the one exceptional charm which they lacked; for this wonderful creature could by his social qualities make pure science popular among a large class of voters who had hardly risen to an appreciation of the immense advantages which had followed the many practical applications of pure science to their own welfare and advancement. Indeed, the impulse that Agassiz gave to the cause of science in the United States is universally admitted to have been as remarkable as it was beneficent. A distinguished American scientist, who was entirely uninfluenced by the geological and zoölogical theories of Agassiz, once confided to me his judgment as to the value of the great naturalist's work as a scientific

force. "I look upon him," he said, "as a prophet, as an apostle of science; he has made every honest investigator his debtor; he has not only elevated in public esteem the intellectual class to which he belongs, but he has induced the moneyed class and the political class to give science the means of carrying out its purposes. Since Agassiz came into the country you cannot but have noticed that private capitalists, State Legislatures, and the Congress of the country have been liberal of aid to every good scientific enterprise. We owe a great part of this liberality to Agassiz. He it was who magnetized the people with his own scientific enthusiasm. He made science popular, because in him science was individualized in the most fascinating and persuasive of human beings. All the rest of us are more or less so dominated by our special lines of investigation, or so infirm in physical health, or so unsympathetic with ignorant people, or so supercilious, or so controlled by some innate 'cussedness' of disposition, that we cannot readily adapt ourselves to the ways of men of the world; but Agassiz, with his enormous physical health and vitality, and his capacity to meet all kinds of men on their own level, drew into our net hundreds of people, powerful through their wealth or their political influence, who would never have taken any interest in science if they had not first been interested in Agassiz. And these men were the men who gave us the money we needed for the extension of scientific knowledge and the promotion of scientific discovery.

Agassiz is a great scientific intelligence; but he is even greater, considered as an immense scientific force."

The extraordinary influence which Agassiz exerted over assemblages of men who had small perception of the scope of his thinking was due to a general impression of his disinterestedness, as well as to his magnetic personality. On one occasion, when his Museum was in need of money for a purely scientific purpose, he invited the members of the Legislature of the State of Massachusetts to visit it, with the design of inducing them to vote the sum he required. After a short persuasive address, delivered in the hall of the Museum, he led them over the building, pointing out the great things that had been achieved, and the still greater things that were to follow if his plan were carried out. In ascending the stairs I happened to overhear two shrewd legislators, evidently farmers, who were considering the propriety of giving the proposed legislative aid. "I don't know much," said one, "about the value of this Museum as a means of education, but of one thing I am certain,—that if we give Agassiz the money he wants, *he* will not make a dollar by it. *That's* in his favor." The appropriation was made a day or two after, though it was generally considered that no other man could have wrung the sum from the reluctant hands of that economical Legislature.

It is hardly necessary now to affirm that Agassiz did not win this distinction of being the greatest



scientific force of the country by any of the various arts of insincerity and indirection. Of no man could it be said with more truth that his behavior was always the expression of his nature. The naturalness of his "good manners" constituted their charm. He was what Dryden calls one of "God Almighty's gentlemen," — a gentleman inborn and inbred; a gentleman who had no need of being trained artificially in the rules of politeness, because in him the gentleman was but one expression of the large individuality of the man. So little was there of varnish in his manners, so little of the restraint on sensibility which we are accustomed to consider as the perfection of good-breeding, that he did not hesitate to indulge in occasional outbreaks of intellectual and moral wrath which coxcombs might consider decidedly improper and ungenteel. Indeed, when anything which he deemed of vital moment was up for discussion, his speech was as spontaneous as that of a generous, warm-hearted, ingenuous, impetuous boy; and yet the finest gentlemen of his time admitted that he generally excelled them all in his instinctive conformity to that higher law of good-breeding which regulates the intercourse of mind with mind. He was the recognized head, the chairman, of a peculiar Boston club, admission to which depended rather on antipathy than sympathy, as regards the character and pursuits of its members. It was ingeniously supposed that persons who looked on all questions of science, theology, and literature from different points of view would be the very

persons who would most enjoy one another's company once a month at a dinner-table. Intellectual anarchy was proclaimed as the fundamental principle of this new organization, or rather disorganization; no man could be voted in who had not shown by his works his disagreement with those who were to be associated with him; and the result was, of course, the most tolerant and delightful of social meetings. Societies based on mutual admiration had been tried, and they had failed; here was a society based on mutual repulsion, and it was a success from the start. The two extremes were Agassiz the naturalist and Emerson the transcendentalist; and they were the first to become intimate friends,—nothing could exceed the admiration of Agassiz for Emerson's intellectual and personal character. The other members agreed to disagree after a similar charming fashion, and the contact and collision of so many discordant minds produced a constant succession of electric sparks both of thought and wit. Probably not even the club of which Johnson, Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, and Goldsmith were members brought so many forcible individuals into such good-natured opposition, or afforded a fairer field for the display of varied talents and accomplishments. When they were all seated at one board, and the frolic hostilities of opinion broke out in the free play of wit and argument, of pointed assertion and prompt retort, the effect was singularly exhilarating. Indeed, there is no justification for a long dinner where the attraction is simply in the succession

of choice dishes and the variety of rare wines. In all really good dinners the brain and heart are more active than the palate and the stomach. But during the long period that Agassiz presided over the association it may be said that though he did not contribute the most sparkling sayings, he was still the informing and inspiring life of the club. He radiated his vital courtesy and cheer through the whole assembly of notables, fused them into a compact body of friends, and was most warmly acknowledged as their natural head by those members who were specially distinguished for their conversational brilliancy and charm. Agassiz himself prized the club above all others, because it brought him once a month into intimate relations with persons who were not particularly interested in the subjects which absorbed his own intellect and tastes. He delighted in hearing and in replying to objections to his scientific convictions made by persons who approached the deep questions which the advance of geology and zoölogy had raised, from points of view opposite to his own. It is said that he was somewhat irritable and impatient in discussing his theories with naturalists and physicists; but he certainly exhibited neither irritability nor impatience in discussing the same theories with theologians, metaphysicians, and men of letters; and he was always delighted to meet on neutral ground opponents who did not pretend to have the knowledge which would qualify them to contest his conclusions so far as they were derived from the special facts of

his own science. He has been charged with arrogance and self-assertion, but he never showed a trace of these qualities in his familiar intercourse with the members of this club. His associates in that society remember him not only with respect but with love. Ask Holmes, Lowell, Cabot, Hoar, Hedge, Norton, — and, could we question the dead, ask Sumner, Andrew, Motley, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Peirce, Dana, Emerson, — what they think of Agassiz, and the response would surely be one of affection for the wonderful creature who combined such endless fertility of generalized knowledge with such unbounded geniality of nature. It would almost seem that there never existed a distinguished man who called forth so much love from a wide variety of distinguished men, whose love carried with it so much implied respect. Indeed, everybody who was honored by the friendship of Agassiz feels honored in the memory of it.

The “recollections” which any of his acquaintances can record of such a noble specimen of physical, intellectual, and moral manhood must be more or less disappointing; for the general impression left on the minds of all who knew him can hardly be expressed in details of his life and conversation. “That dear Agassiz” was the judgment passed upon him by a French custodian of scientific collections, who had frequent opportunities to know how insatiable was the greed for knowledge which characterized this greatest of modern naturalists; and “that dear Agassiz” expresses the feeling which is still

uppermost in the hearts of all American friends who survive him.

And, first, no justice can be done to Agassiz which does not recognize the deep religiousness of his nature. In his youth and early manhood he was a pronounced materialist. It is said of the ordinary New England divinity student that at a certain time in his life he "experiences" religion. At a corresponding period in *his* purely scientific career Agassiz may be said to have "experienced" irreligion. The same ardor of nature which made him a resolute scientist made him, at least on the negative side, a resolute atheist. And he was perfectly honest in his disbelief. It is difficult to fix the date when he became a theist. One thing however is certain, that he passed into all the mental and moral moods which lead many modern scientists to ignore or deny the existence of God, and to rest satisfied in the general conception of "Law," without seeing or feeling any need of a Law-giver. I have said that he passed into these moods, thoroughly "experienced" them, and felt as well as understood all the logic and all the facts on which such "Positivism" is founded. But he gradually passed *out* of this state as he came nearer and nearer, as an investigator, to the inmost meaning of Nature. He ended, much to the contempt and disgust of many of his most distinguished scientific contemporaries, in a belief in God more intense than that professed by the majority of theologians. His experience of religion was even more marked than



his previous experience of irreligion, and it carried with it all the force of his nature. Having gone through all the dreary and dogmatic scepticism in which most men of science were contented to remain, he amazed his own class of scientists, in his "Essay on Classification," by urging them to abandon their neutral or hostile attitude toward natural theology, and to look on the various divisions and classes of Nature as the embodiment of thoughts previously existing in a divine creative mind. The scorn with which this essay was received in some quarters was unspeakable. Its author lost caste among many of the foremost naturalists of France, Germany, and England. He was, indeed, accused of shamming religion in order to induce the Puritans of America to give him money to carry out his scientific schemes. It was held to be disgraceful that a great naturalist who had done so much to extend the limits of the "Knowable" should forfeit his intellectual rank by ignominiously giving in to the claims of the priests, and asserting that the "Unknowable" was a personal and infinite God, "known" more or less to the student who explores scientifically the facts of Nature with a mind untrammelled by either atheistic or theistic prejudices and preconceptions.

The European scientists were strangely at fault in considering the theism of Agassiz as at all influenced by the class that they contemptuously designated as "the priests." His education as a scientist

was entirely independent of all the influences which surround the childhood, youth, and early manhood of most English and American men of science. He never felt the passions or appreciated the theories of any of the theological systems from the dictation of which they may pride themselves on being emancipated. He always seemed to me strangely ignorant of the doctrines which divided the various sects and churches of Christendom, or at least strangely indifferent to them. If he was of any sect, my impression is that he inclined to the sect of Unitarians; but I would not assert even that. In reading his "Essay on Classification" I was reminded of the ideas of law presented in the first book of Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity," and I sent the volume to him. He much admired the first book, but took small interest in what followed; and of Hooker's position as the greatest thinker of the Church of England, and as one of the leading minds in the Elizabethan period of English literature, he knew little or nothing. He was, in fact, a naturalist pure and simple, and he rose into supernaturalism in the most natural way.

Indeed, far from compromising the cause of science in order to win the good-will of theologians, he gave the theologians a great shock by early advancing the theory that mankind had no common ancestor, but that its various races were derived from separate originals. He did not much care about names; he had no objection to the name Adam or the name Eve, but he believed in numerous Adams and numer-

ous Eves. A storm of theological opposition was raised against him in New England on account of this heresy; and I remember asking him, before the clatter had subsided, how he contrived to preserve his scientific independence while living in a community which was generally hostile to all opinions that clashed violently with its theological, philanthropic, and political beliefs and passions. "Why," he answered, "the reason is plain: I never was a quarter of a dollar ahead in the world, and I never expect to be. When a man of science wants money for himself, he may be compelled to subordinate science to popular opinion; when he wants money simply for the advancement of science, he gets it somehow, because it is known that not a cent sticks in his own pocket." And he added, in reference to his own theory: "You know that my belief in the essential unity of the races of mankind is not based on their physical descent from a common ancestor, but on the higher ideal ground of a plan existing in the Divine Mind, discriminating man from every other class of animals, yet carried out according to the laws which regulate the geographical distribution of both men and animals on this planet. Before this scientific discussion is carried far, many of my theological opponents will find that the Divine plan in the creation of man is of much more importance than any question of his physical descent, or the agreement or disagreement of my theory with their interpretations of the first chapter of Genesis. I

approach the whole question from a standpoint entirely different from theirs, as I do every other question where science comes into collision with popular belief. And, mind you, my method of arriving at the doctrine of the Divine Existence is a purely scientific method; and you will find, perhaps before you die, that this ostentatious denial or ignoring of God, common among naturalists whom I warmly esteem, and whose additions to natural history I am the most ready to acknowledge, will end in making the science itself sterile. The Positive system, under its many names and modifications, will fail at last in generating the enthusiasm for new discoveries. When the present generation of observers has passed away, the new generation will be more zealous in establishing their dogmas of atheism than any of their theological opponents will be in defending their superstitious dogmas founded on the beliefs of past ages. Their disbelief might be of small account if it were not certain to interfere with their original researches. But I fear science will suffer in the hands of its seeming devotees. They will become controversialists instead of being investigators. Now, the progress of science depends on the ever-recurring numbers of noble young men who will be attracted to science by the hope of advancing it by new discoveries, and the unselfishness with which they enter on this course must be as complete as that which we know has animated Christian missionaries. If on the threshold of their career they are supplied with suf-

ficient scientific facts and theories to induce them to engage in a free fight with the persons around them who are not scientifically enlightened, they will spend in the popularizing of current scientific hypotheses the energies which should be sacredly devoted to the increase of scientific facts. And then I will frankly tell you that my experience in prolonged scientific investigations convinces me that a belief in God — a God who is behind and within the chaos of ungeneralized facts beyond the present vanishing-points of human knowledge — adds a wonderful stimulus to the man who attempts to penetrate into the region of the unknown. For myself, I may say that I now never make the preparations for penetrating into some small province of Nature hitherto undiscovered, without breathing a prayer to the Being who hides His secrets from me only to allure me graciously on to the unfolding of them. I sometimes hear preachers speak of the sad condition of men who live without God in the world; but a scientist who lives without God in the world seems to me worse off than ordinary men."

Of course I do not pretend to give the exact words of Agassiz in this report. I am only sure as to the playful remark about his never having a quarter of a dollar ahead in the world, and of the solemn and somewhat reserved way in which he spoke of the involuntary prayer which ever accompanied his investigations into the Unknown. The rest embodies his general opinions, often expressed, — that every



rounded theory of the universe must be imperfect; that the Divine secret still remains undiscovered; and that scientists would be more profitably employed in extending the boundaries of positive science than in propounding any dogmatic system miscalled "positive philosophy." Of one thing I am sure,—he had a deep conviction, as strong as that of Augustine or Bernard or Luther or Edwards or Wesley or Channing, that there were means of communication between the Divine and the human mind. He had an inward experience of this mystical fact,—a fact which lies at the centre of all religion,—almost as strong as that which we freely accord to the experience of men of religious genius. This "familiar grasp of things Divine" was not one of the least of the fascinations of Agassiz; and he strenuously insisted that the human mind, in whatever direction of art, science, or literature it was exercised, would starve and dwindle on its own resources alone. It must, he declared, be sustained and enriched by some Divine Power above it if it desired to be continuously powerful; it must be open to inspiration from the Creator of the world if it would gather strength for the difficult task of investigating it.

He thus proved that he possessed, in addition to the ordinary equipment of the accomplished man of science, that subtle spiritual essence which is *soul*. Theologically speaking, all of us have souls, as well as bodies and understandings; but in the common

experience of life soul may be said to be a rare, an exceptional quality of human beings. It comes out in flashes here and there; but the majority of men, as they ordinarily meet their fellows, indicate but slight possession of it. Hence the justification of the seeming profanity of the passionate artist, who was trying to convince a dull man of culture that this mysterious quality was evident in the picture he was showing him. "I am not sure," he at last exclaimed, as he found his exposition produced no effect, — "I am not sure that *you* have any soul; but, by —, I *know* that *I* have!" Certainly all who came into contact with Agassiz were made aware that *he* had a soul, whether or not they had one. Indeed, it flamed out in every expression of his magnificent nature, was evident in every statement of fact or affirmation of principle, in the simplest as well as the greatest things conveying the impression of intense, abundant — even superabundant — spiritual *life*.

A belief in the immortality of the soul was of course natural to a man who had such an inward, vehement experience of its reality and force. "To execute great things," says Vauvenargues, "a man must live as though he had never to die." Agassiz lived in this way. He must have been surprised when he received the first intimation, about the age of fifty-five, that he was mortal. His physical health was so great, that when he was superintending the arrangement and publication of one of his early works, he labored for a couple of months steadily at his desk at

the rate of sixteen or eighteen hours a day, taking no exercise; and when the delightful task was completed he started on an excursion among the Alps, which exacted as much labor from his limbs as the months preceding it had exacted from his brain. In fact he seemed, up to the period of his first attack of disease, utterly insensible to bodily as to mental fatigue. He never had an hour in his life when he was not pleasantly occupied; and he innocently wondered, when the people he met in society sometimes complained of being bored with life. Every contrivance to kill time appeared to him the funniest of all jokes. "Time!" he was wont to exclaim; "my only trouble is that I have not enough time for my work. I cannot understand why anybody should be idle; much less can I understand why anybody should be oppressed by having time hang on his hands. There is never a moment, except when I am asleep, that I am not joyfully occupied. Please give to me the hours which you say are a bore to you, and I will receive them as the most precious of presents. For my part, I wish the day would never come to an end." His recreations were only variations in his occupations. He told me that he had never known a dull hour in his whole life. He had many vexations in the course of his career, but his vexations were only new stimulants to his tireless activity. His experience of life was so intense and joyous that he hardly admitted the thought that he was not to live forever. Death, physical death, might alter his mode of activity. He admitted that

this accident must happen to him at some time or another, but his faith in the continuousness of his individual life never wavered. To be ten minutes in his company was to obtain the strongest argument for the immortality of the soul. The grandeur of his scientific schemes, especially the scheme of completing his Museum so that it should visibly represent the comprehensive plan existing in his ever-dilating mind, impressed you with the feeling that the physical man himself would "never say die" to the most importunate command of that grim skeleton who huddles into a common grave the philosopher whose brain is glowing with unrealized conceptions, and the husbandman who has only just relaxed his grasp on the plough. When Goethe heard of the death of his mother, he wondered why a woman of such incessant mental activity should have "consented to die." Hundreds of the friends of Agassiz, who could not pretend to have a tenth part of his marvellous vitality, must have felt a similar wonder when they heard of his departure from earth. No two ideas seemed more incompatible than the idea of Agassiz and the idea of death; for that grand soul, with its confident and exhilarating activity exercised on large designs which could be completed within the limits of no mortal life, appeared to carry within it the principle of deathlessness; and this impression was strengthened by the fact that what it could possibly achieve here was but a small part of the vast work it contemplated. He once told me, in illustration of the theory that the



mind worked during even a dreamless sleep, that on one occasion, after toiling on a problem which he felt sure a few hours more of consecutive thinking would solve, he was compelled by physical fatigue to go to bed. He slept for some seven hours, and when he awoke he found the answer to his last obstinate questioning of Nature clear in his mind. It would seem that this might be a faint type of the unwearied continuousness of his thinking faculty throughout all the long sleep of death.

It is well known that Agassiz held to the doctrine of the immortality of the souls of animals as well as to the immortality of the souls of men. In a conversation I had with him a number of years ago, he attempted to explain to me his conception of the employments of a naturalist in the next stage of existence, and of the unbounded wealth of material which his soul would possess in observing the souls of the objects of his pursuit. To the proposition that animals had no souls he of course emphatically dissented, whenever it was brought forward. On one occasion, when the subject was up for discussion, I told him that in a recent visit to the country I had obtained confirmation of his theory from an unexpected quarter; for I had overheard a farmer, who was goading a yoke of reluctant oxen to perform an impossible task, exhaust all the vocabulary of blasphemy on the poor beasts, singling out not their bodies, but their souls, as the things he specially desired to consign to eternal perdition; and that he was as particular in selecting the inward,



unseen, immaterial essence of the toiling creatures for profane condemnation as he would have been in swearing at an average Christian man. "Ah!" said Agassiz, with a laugh, "that reminds me how stupid most of the keepers of animals are, and how little the fellows know of the minds and feelings of the creatures they oppress." He then went on to indicate that his theory as to animals having souls was derived from his interior knowledge of their natures. And indeed his sympathies included all kinds of animals, as they included all kinds of men; and he was repaid in kind. There is not, I think, a single instance of his having been injured by any serpent or beast however poisonous or ferocious, though much of his life was passed in the company of animals. It is asserted that they have no language; but he found no difficulty in conversing with them, and they seemed to understand him very well, adapted as his modes of communicating with them were to their different natures. There probably never was a naturalist who combined such a knowledge of their physical organization with such a penetrating glance into what he called their souls. He was, in the æsthetics of zoölogy, the dramatist of the animal kingdom, as Shakspeare was the dramatist of the human race. Whether he had to do with a jelly-fish or a whale or an elephant, he knew each of them, as Shakspeare knew the varieties of human kind,—from "the heart outward, and not from the flesh inward." It was curious to notice his behavior in presence of the domesticated animals. The

neigh of a horse to him was a more friendly neigh than any ever heard by a hostler or a jockey. He carried serpents in his hat and in his pockets with a grand unconcern, and dropped them sometimes even in his bed-room, so that his wife was frequently troubled by finding them coiled up in her boots. "Beauty," says the poet, "is its own excuse for being." Agassiz went beyond this tolerant maxim, to the extent of affirming that deformity has its own excuse for being. The fact that any animal existed was with him a justification of its existence; and after conversing with it, and penetrating to its interior nature, he treated it as Shakspeare treated Dogberry or Ancient Pistol or Mrs. Quickly, or any of the other queer blood-relations connected with him through a common descent from Adam. As there was no form of human existence which was too low to be beneath the humane sympathies of Shakspeare, so there was no kind of animal existence which was too low to engage the sympathies of Agassiz. And the most evil members of the animal kingdom had no malignant feeling toward him; indeed, they cheerfully consented to let him kill them, knowing that by such a submission to his will they were practically elected as representatives of their species in the grand legislative assembly of the Animal Kingdom gathered in the great hall of the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, under the literal "Speakership" of Agassiz; that is, under the man who was alone capable of being the interpreter of their language, so that its signs could

be clearly understood by the human race, from which they were divided by peculiarities of organization and of soul. One can almost conceive of these martyrs of the animal kingdom as rejoicing while enduring the death which insured to the species to which they belonged an intelligent recognition of their merits from the members of the superior race, to whom they were thus introduced through his friendly agency. Whenever I look at them, preserved so carefully in their glass jars filled with alcohol, I for one am delighted to find them in such excellent spirits!

But Agassiz was not merely an accurate scientific observer in the realm of zoölogy; he was a powerful scientific thinker, and from his youth was intensely interested in the great question of classification. He studied all the various systems of classification with intense interest, and came to the conclusion that the divisions of the animal kingdom according to type, class, order, family, genus, and species were not devices of the human understanding to classify its knowledge, but corresponded to ideas in the Divine Mind in His plan of creation; and that this arrangement in Nature was gradually discovered by science, not invented by it. He naturally desired to confer with the champions of all systems; and in his early manhood, after mastering the theory of Cuvier, he hastened to Germany to consult with Oken, the transcendentalist in zoölogical classification. "After I had delivered to him my letter of introduction," he once said to me, "Oken asked me to dine with him,

and you may suppose with what joy I accepted the invitation. The dinner consisted only of potatoes, boiled and roasted; but it was the best dinner I ever ate, for there was Oken. He unfolded to me, during the hours of a long afternoon, the principles of his system more completely than I could have obtained them from his books. There never was such a feast! never before were such potatoes grown on this planet! for the mind of the man seemed to enter into what we ate sociably together, and I devoured his intellect while munching his potatoes. I repeat it — I never ate such a dinner before or since."

In connection with his studies on the true method of classifying animals, Agassiz was passionately interested in their geographical distribution. "If I live," he once exclaimed, "I hope to be able to write a good book on that subject. It is of immense importance, having vital relations to other branches of investigation now pursued by some of the best minds of our time. My convictions are almost settled on this matter. I think that the area over which animals roam is determined by their constitution and habits. Indeed, I am almost willing to assert that when God gave them legs He made the gift under the inexorable condition that they should never run away."

The theories of Agassiz, as a thinker, are now the subject of vehement controversy among men of science. It is, however, my general impression that the facts necessary to place the Darwinian theory on the solid foundation of a law of Nature are yet undiscov-



ered; and it was this absence of facts to confirm the most captivating of theories which impelled Agassiz to his passionate opposition, his "noble rage," whenever the theory was mentioned. Indeed, that theory was the *bête noire* of his later scientific life. It diverted him from his own selected paths of investigation into the turmoil of controversy, so that his scientific debates were carried on at the expense of limiting his scientific discoveries. He was conscious of it himself, for the last of his published essays records his belief that science suffers by every diversion of the energies of scientists which tends to substitute premature theorizing for continuous investigating. But in all his contests he never undervalued the positive contributions that any of his opponents had made to zoölogy; and his admiration of Darwin was always warmly expressed, checked only by disagreement with him on theoretical grounds. Owen was another eminent Englishman whose fame he extended in the United States by enthusiastically pointing out to all questioners the grounds of his admiration of that great zoölogist; and when Owen was up for exposition or discussion, it was only by some side remark that his auditors learned that Owen and Agassiz were antagonists on certain disputed questions. He loved his scientific enemies as few Christians have grace enough to love their personal enemies; but he always demanded that they should be men who were practical investigators of the facts of zoölogy. For amateurs who took the facts at second hand, and



built up ingenious systems by combining the discoveries of many specialists in science, he had an almost irrational indifference. I once asked him what he thought of an attack on his scientific position made by an accomplished scholar and thinker, who had mastered the different theories put forth by the acknowledged representatives of his science, and had decided that Agassiz must be ranked in the second or third class. He burst into a roar of laughter, treating what I considered a serious attack as a great joke. "Why, just think of it," he exclaimed; "he undertakes to fix my place among zoölogists, and he is not himself a zoölogist!" He wondered that I did not join in the laugh at what he deemed the 'funniest literary incident that had recently occurred. "And," he added, "don't you know that he has never been an *observer*?"

The meaning of "observation," in his mind, differed strangely from the common use of the word. With him it meant the strenuous exertion of all the faculties behind the eye, as well as the assiduous training of the eye itself. After he had been some fifteen years in this country, I asked him what he thought was the best result here of his efforts as a teacher of science, and he answered: "I have educated five observers. One of them, to be sure, has turned out to be my deadliest personal enemy; but I still affirm that he is a good observer, and that is the best compliment I could pay him were he my dearest friend."

At the time that "spiritualism" was most popular

in New England the men of science were adjured by intelligent ladies and gentlemen who thought they could believe the testimony of their eyes, and who thus considered themselves to be "observers," to investigate the phenomena. Agassiz was among the foremost of the scientists who stepped forward in answer to this appeal; but he and his associates could not force the spiritualists to comply with any of the conditions under which scientists observe. They were constantly taunted for not investigating the wonders which they were constantly prevented by the wonder-workers themselves from investigating according to the accredited methods of science. Agassiz during this controversy happened to meet Home, the chief magician of the sect, in a railway car. "It is sad, Mr. Agassiz," said Home, "that the prejudices of you men of science interpose to prevent the advancement of science, owing to the fact that you refuse to investigate the phenomena which are nightly presented to all unprejudiced observers." "Mr. Home," was the reply, "I never refuse to investigate anything which promises to advance science; and nothing will give me more delight than to investigate the marvels which occur, as you say, at your meetings." "Well, then," replied Home, "come this very night and witness the appearance of the spirit hand." "Nothing will give me more pleasure," answered Agassiz, "than to be one of the selected guests around the table where the spirit hand appears. My opinion is that it is a physical hand, with a little phosphorus rubbed over it;

but I am open to conviction. I am a little skilled in the use of weapons, and all I ask is that I shall have the privilege of putting my stiletto through it. If the hand is a spirit hand, no harm will occur; if it is a human hand, I feel confident in my power to transfix it on the table, much to the discomfort of its possessor." Home declined the test. Such a want of faith, he said, would necessarily prevent the spirit hand from appearing. And, indeed, all means of investigation which Agassiz suggested were dismissed as not calculated to induce the spirits to communicate with any company of which he was a member.

The geniality of the nature of Agassiz comprehended, as I have said, all mankind, and all the branches of the animal kingdom. His sympathies, in the full meaning of Wordsworth's lines —

"Aloft ascending and descending down,  
Even to inferior kinds,"

were universal; but added to this was a personal affectionateness to his mother, his wife, his children, and his particular friends which it was beautiful to witness. His fiftieth birthday was celebrated by the Saturday Club with a special dinner; and notable poems were read on the occasion by such friends as Lowell, Holmes, and Longfellow. Longfellow's verses are too familiar to be quoted in full, but every reader will remember that they represent Nature as taking the boy by the hand, and leading him irresistibly on to his true vocation of discovering her secrets, which she gladly unfolded to the favorite she had chosen.

There were toil and struggle in the pursuit, but she still lured him on to his object, and —

“Whenever the way seemed long,  
And his heart began to fail,  
She would sing a more wonderful song,  
Or tell a more marvellous tale.”

And at last came the crowning stanza, where the natural mother mourns over the seductions of the great mother, that have drawn her beloved son from the fireside where she wished to keep him : —

“And the mother at home says, ‘Hark!  
For his voice I listen and yearn ;  
It is growing late and dark,  
And my boy does not return.’”

I sat near Agassiz at the table, and watched the effect of the poem as read in the quiet, subdued tones of Longfellow's voice. His head was bent modestly down, with a musing smile on his lips, as he recalled the scenes of his childhood and youth ; but when came the allusion to his mother, it was curious to note the effect of natural emotion on a vigorous nature which had intrepidly and even gayly faced death in every form without the least fear of it. The ruddy face palpably reddened still more with restrained feeling ; in a second or two the tears gathered in the bright eyes, and as the last line was uttered they dropped slowly down his cheeks, one after another, with that slight gasp of suppressed emotion in the throat which it is almost terrible to witness in a strong man. The silence that ensued



could not have been more than half a minute, but it seemed to us who were present to endure an hour. Longfellow himself could not have dreamed of producing such an effect, for his tone of voice in the last verse was almost monotonous. But Agassiz recovered his equanimity as by magic, lifted his great head from its recumbent posture, and, with eyes still glistening, bowed and smiled his acknowledgments to the poet with exquisite grace and good-fellowship. The ordinary course of conversation at a festive dinner then ran fluently on. It was the first time that I had seen a great, brave, strong man shed tears, and I am not ambitious of ever seeing it again. It was inexpressibly affecting and inexpressibly painful.

It may be well to add that "Louis" was the favorite son of Madame Agassiz. She was the wife of a Protestant clergyman; and Professor Silliman, who visited her in 1851, tells us that although nearly fourscore, "her healthful person was erect, tall, and dignified, while her animated and warm address placed us instantly at ease." As soon as Professor Silliman told her that he was the friend of her son, that his adopted country welcomed him among its most precious possessions, "her strong frame was agitated, her voice trembled with emotion, and the flowing tears told the story of a mother's heart not yet chilled by age. . . . The next morning she came, walking alone a long distance in the rain, to bid us farewell, and parted from us, evidently with deep emotion, and not concealed, for we had brought the vision of her favor-



ite son near to her mental sight again. She brought for Mrs. Silliman a little bouquet of pansies, and bade us tell her son her *pensées* were all for him." Such a mother! In reading but a few days ago these passages from the journal of the venerable Professor Silliman, I detected the cause of the unwonted outbreak of sensibility which marked the celebration of the fiftieth birthday of Agassiz.

Agassiz, when he first visited the United States, had no intention of making here his permanent home; but he ended in becoming a passionate patriot of his adopted country; and his love for it, his delight in it, and his determination to remain in it were expressed in terms which might almost have satisfied the requirements of Mr. Jefferson Brick. The warm recognition he met from his scientific brethren must have been very gratifying; but he also found that he soon became a favorite with every kind and variety of our people,—scholars, merchants, manufacturers, mechanics, and farmers,—and that he could not appear before any audience without receiving the most flattering testimonials of regard as well as of respect. The hearts, the minds, the purses of the people were open to him. He often remarked to me, as he doubtless remarked to thousands of others, that he had never known such a population as ours. In Europe, if you desired to advance science, you had a hard task in getting money from kings and nobles; but here, he said, the democracy seemed more liberal than kings and nobles. He never ceased to be amazed at the

amount of money he obtained from our citizens and legislators in aid of his scientific schemes, and at the short space of time that was consumed in obtaining it. His surprise at first resembled that of Jenny Lind when she faced the immense audience that attended her opening concert, the price of admission being ten dollars. "Where," she asked Barnum, "does de' peoples gets all de money?" The recognition of Agassiz was not confined to the cultured or the moneyed classes. In his scientific explorations in various parts of the country he found that when he desired aid to unearth some curious object he had discovered, a few minutes' talk with farm-laborers or miners near by would send them after him to the spot where they were to use their shovels and pickaxes in his unpaid service. His fame was so diffused that no queer living thing was caught in wood or river, no strange rock unearthed in opening the track for a new railroad, that was not sent to him as the one man in the country that could explain it. His magnetic power when he was himself in the field of observation resembled that of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, drawing all living creatures after him to the sound of his alluring music. He made everybody interested in natural history who came within his sphere. To all general statements there are, of course, exceptions; and the exception in the case of Agassiz was, as may easily be guessed, that of a hard-headed Yankee stage-driver among the New Hampshire hills. On one occasion while journeying through the White Mountain region

he and his scientific companion, seated on the top of the stage, irritated the driver by repeatedly calling upon him to stop when they noticed anything botanically fascinating on the road, and jumping down from their seats in order to obtain it. Professor Felton, who was with them, kept his seat during the whole ride, and told the driver in explanation of their conduct that they were naturalists. On the next day, when the coachman had another load of passengers, he narrated to those near him on the box the strange freaks of his yesterday's companions. "Their keeper," he added, "called them naterals; and certainly they behaved as sich."

Agassiz came at last, as I have said, to love our country so dearly that no inducements were strong enough to tempt him to leave it. He showed to me, shortly after the correspondence was closed, the series of letters which passed between him and the minister of Napoleon III. The Emperor offered him the post of director of the *Jardin des Plantes*, with a seat, I think, in the Senate. The position was one which a scientific man of the highest rank might well covet, and the emoluments of the office, with that of the other office associated with it, were quite large. His acceptance of the offer would have given him at Paris a rank equal to that which Cuvier occupied in his time. He respectfully declined it, on the ground that he was then engaged in original researches in the United States which promised to be very fruitful in zoölogical discovery, and which would take him some

years to complete. He considered that the correspondence was closed; but he was surprised by receiving another letter from the minister, renewing the offer, and informing him that the high office would be kept open for him until his American researches were completed. Agassiz justly thought that this was the greatest compliment ever paid to him; but his determination to live and die in his adopted country was fixed, and his letter indicating this determination closed the correspondence. I preserve but a vague memory of the letters; they will probably be published in the forthcoming biography of Agassiz by the accomplished and high-souled woman, the companion of his scientific journeys, the partner of his thoughts, troubles, anxieties, triumphs, and aspirations, who was at once the wife of his mind and of his heart. The simplicity, the earnestness, the depth of his affections were never so clearly indicated to his friends as in the slightest reference he made to her. Such marriages are surely made in heaven before they are afterward consummated on earth!

Another bond which held him to the United States was his high esteem for our American men of science. He felt they were not properly appreciated abroad, especially in England. He hoped to live to the time when this country would be recognized as one of the centres of science, and not as a mere scientific colony of Germany, France, and Great Britain; when the judgments of our scientific associations and journals would confer or confirm reputations all over the world;



and when none of our scientists would value, as some of them now do, a slight recognition in foreign journals of science more than the warmest appreciation from American organs of scientific opinion. On the latter point he was wont to indulge in delightful outbursts of noble rage. "Don't you see," he exclaimed, "that every American man of science who is elated by foreign recognition, and makes it a mark of honor distinguishing him from his brethren here, stamps himself as a provincial as much as a Canadian or New Brunswick politician does when he is unduly excited by a favorable notice from the government at London? Do you suppose that men like Bache or Henry or Peirce or Wyman, or a dozen others, care what is said of them abroad? They stand on what they are and on what they have done and are doing; and they know that everything they really do to advance science passes inevitably into the current of scientific thought, and must be respected, whatever Edinburgh or London or Paris or Berlin may say. They are metropolitans, not provincials; and I hate to see an American of scientific genius show himself a provincial in spirit, when his genius might easily place him among the metropolitans, and force foreigners — as far as in science any man can be a foreigner — to frankly acknowledge his equality with the best of them. You can easily make this country a centre of scientific intelligence if you discard the foolish notion that your true judges are not in your own country but in Europe. Respect yourselves, and they will soon



come to respect you. Be indifferent to what they say, if you desire them to say pleasant things of you." Indeed, Agassiz spoke on this matter as we have heard some self-respecting men of letters speak of the abjectness of spirit which leads many of our authors to value a bit of condescending praise awarded to them by some obscure critic in an English magazine or review as of more worth than the most careful, cordial, and intelligent judgment passed upon them by an American organ of literary opinion.

Indeed, few native-born Americans accepted more thoroughly than did Agassiz the ideas and sentiments on which our institutions are founded. He had a boundless confidence in the intellectual as well as the material future of the country. As he was himself brought into cordial relations with every class of our society, and was liked and aided by all classes, he considered that pure science (which he specially represented) would always have its claims recognized by our democracy, if men of science followed his example in coming into close contact with the minds and hearts of the people. He had immense confidence in education; but then he desired that educators should be persons capable not merely of communicating knowledge, but of communicating the sacred *thirst* for knowledge. In his will he described himself as "Louis Agassiz, *Teacher*." Every schoolmaster and schoolmistress in the land must have felt an unwonted, ennobling thrill in reading that announcement, for it gave to his or her work a dignity which could

not be denied, after one of the foremost minds of the age had adopted "teacher" as his peculiar distinction. Indeed, Agassiz always insisted that something resembling miracles might be wrought in *re-forming* the people through *in-forming* them, if teachers could be inspired with the grandeur of the task imposed upon them; and his hope for the future of the country rested on his firm belief that it would produce teachers competent to grapple with ignorance and vice, and to educate the democracy whose will, enlightened by knowledge, was to determine the fate of the land. He thought the profession of the teacher the noblest of all professions; and he extended the office of teachers so as to include all good and great minds engaged in disseminating knowledge or in increasing it. He himself gloried in the title of "schoolmaster," and preferred it to that of "professor;" no schoolmaster or schoolmistress ever conversed with him ten minutes without gaining new inspiration, as well as new information, by contact with that comprehensive mind and opulent soul; and there is no danger that our young democracy will grow up to manhood unfitted to perform their duties and vindicate their rights, provided the spirit of Agassiz animates their teachers.

## SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

It is impossible for those who knew Emerson only through his writings to understand the peculiar love and veneration felt for him by those who knew him personally. Only by intercourse with him could the singular force, sweetness, elevation, originality, and comprehensiveness of his nature be fully appreciated; and the friend or acquaintance, however he might differ from him in opinion, felt the peculiar fascination of his character, and revolved around this solar mind in obedience to the law of spiritual gravitation, — the spiritual law operating, like the natural law, directly as the mass, and inversely as the square of the distance. The friends nearest to him loved and honored him most; but those who only met him occasionally felt the attraction of his spiritual power, and could not mention him without a tribute of respect. There probably never was another man of the first class, with a general system of thought at variance with accredited opinions, who exercised so much gentle, persuasive power over the minds of his opponents. By declining all temptations to controversy he never raised the ferocious spirit which con-

troversy engenders; he went on, year after year, in affirming certain spiritual facts which had been revealed to him when his soul was on the heights of spiritual contemplation; and if he differed from other minds, he thought it ridiculous to attempt to convert them to his individual insight and experience by *arguments* against their individual insights and their individual experiences. To his readers in the closet and his hearers on the lecture platform he poured lavishly out from his intellectual treasury — from the seemingly exhaustless Fortunatus' purse in his mind — the silver and gold, the pearls, rubies, amethysts, opals, and diamonds of thought. If his readers and his audiences chose to pick them up, they were welcome to them; but if they conceived he was deceiving them with sham jewelry, he would not condescend to explain the laborious processes in the mines of meditation by which he had brought the hidden treasures to light. I never shall forget his curt answer to a superficial auditor of one of his lectures. The critic was the intellectual busybody of the place, dipping into everything, knowing nothing, but contriving by his immense loquacity to lead the opinion of the town. "Now, Mr. Emerson," he said, "I appreciated much of your lecture, but I should like to speak to you of certain things in it which did not command my assent and approbation." Emerson turned to him, gave him one of his piercing looks, and replied, "Mr. —, if anything I have spoken this evening met your mood, it is well; if it did not,

I must tell you that I never argue on these high questions ;” and as he thus somewhat haughtily escaped from his would-be querist, he cared little that this gossip and chatterer about philosophy and religion would exert all his influence to prevent Emerson from ever lecturing again in that town.

Indeed, everybody who intimately knew this seer and thinker had the good sense never to intrude into the inward sanctities and privacies of his individual meditations, and vulgarly ask questions as to the doubts and conflicts he had encountered in that utter loneliness of thought where his individual soul, in direct contact as he supposed with the “Oversoul,” was trying to solve problems of existence which perplex all thoughtful minds. He would do nothing more than make affirmations regarding the deep things of the spirit, which were to be accepted or rejected as they happened to strike or miss the point of inlet into the other intellects he addressed.

This austere reticence was consistent with the most perfect sincerity. Indeed, Emerson preached sincerity as among the first of virtues. He never hesitated to tell the poets, prose writers, reformers, “fanatics,” who were his friends and acquaintances, exactly what he thought of them ; and there was never a doubt of his mental and moral honesty in their reception of his criticism. He could afford to be sincere, for everybody felt that there was no taint of envy, jealousy, or malice in his nature. When he frankly told such men as Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes,



and Whittier that in a particular poem they did not come up to his high ideal of what a poet should be and do, they assented to the criticism, and never dreamed that his judgment was influenced by the failure of his own poetry to attract that public attention which was righteously due to its vital excellence; for they all cordially agreed in thinking that he was the greatest poet the country had produced. There is not a solitary instance of his hesitating; kindly disapprobation of a writer who ranked among his associates which did not make the writer grateful to Emerson for his criticism, and which did not make him sensible that nothing base or mean could have prompted it. So it was with the ardent reformers. Garrison and Phillips, not to mention others, instinctively felt that Emerson was a man not to be assailed when he differed from them in their method of applying to affairs the moral sentiment of which Emerson was the most eloquent and authoritative spokesman: not, indeed, a voice crying in the wilderness, but a voice which seemed to utter eternal decrees, coming from the serene communion of the speaker with the very source of moral law.

The native elevation of Emerson's mind and the general loftiness of his thinking have sometimes blinded his admirers to the fact that he was one of the shrewdest of practical observers, and was capable of meeting so-called practical men on the level of the facts and principles which they relied upon

for success in life. When I first had the happiness to make his acquaintance I was a clerk in a banking-house. I have a faint memory of having written in a penny paper a notice of his first volume of Essays which differed altogether from the notices that appeared in business journals of a higher rank and price. The first thing that struck me was the quaint, keen, homely good-sense which was one of the marked characteristics of the volume; and I contrasted the coolness of this transcendentalist, whenever he discussed matters relating to the conduct of life, with the fury of delusion under which merchants of established reputation seemed sometimes to be laboring in their mad attempts to resist the operation of the natural laws of trade. They, I thought, were the transcendentalists, the subjective poets, the Rousseaus and Byrons of business, who in their greed were fiercely "accommodating the shows of things to the desires of the mind," without any practical insight of principles or foresight of consequences. Nothing more amazed me, when I was a clerk, recording transactions in which I incurred no personal responsibility, than the fanaticism of capitalists in venturing their money in wild speculations. The willingness to buy waste and worthless Eastern lands; the madness of the men who sunk their millions in certain railroads; and the manias which occasionally seize upon and passionately possess business men, surpassing in folly those fine frenzies of the imagination which are considered to lead to

absurdities belonging to poets alone, — all these facts early impressed me with the conviction that a transcendentalist of the type of Emerson was as good a judge of investments on earth as he was of investments in the heavens above the earth.

As far as my memory serves me at this time, I think to me, in my youthful presumption, belongs the dubious honor or dishonor of calling him our "Greek-Yankee, — a cross between Plato and Jonathan Slick." I am less certain as to the other statement, that he was "a Hindoo-Yankee, — a cross between Brahma and Poor Richard;" and there are so many competitors for the distinction of originating these epigrammatic impertinences that I should no more dare to present my claims to priority in inventing them than to re-open the controversy respecting the authorship of "Beautiful Snow," or "Rock me to sleep, Mother." But I always wondered that the Franklin side of his opulent and genial nature did not draw to him a host of readers who might be repelled by the dazzling though puzzling sentences in which his ideal philosophy found expression. It is to be supposed that such persons refused to read him because they distrusted his constant tendency to combine beauty with use. The sense of beauty, indeed, was so vital an element in the very constitution of his being that it decorated everything it touched. He was a thorough artist, while inculcating maxims of thrift far beyond those of Poor Richard. His beautiful genius could not be

suppressed even when he discoursed of the ugliest sides of a farmer's life ; he shed an ideal light over pots and cans, over manure-heaps and cattle-raising ; and when he announced that maxim of celestial prudence, " Hitch your wagon to a star," the transcendentalist was discovered peeping through the economist ; and it became hard to believe that he was in ordinary affairs a really practical man. He should have stuck, the economists said, to the wagon, and left out the star ; though the introduction of the star was really the most practical thing in his quaint statement of the vital dependence of individual thrift on directing and all-embracing law.

The raciest testimony that ever came within my knowledge as to the soundness of Emerson in practical matters was delivered by a sturdy, stalwart Vermonter in a car on the Fitchburg Railroad. My journey was to be a tedious one of three hundred miles, and when I took my seat in the car I felt that my fellow-passengers would give me no such glimpses into their characters as would be afforded by a ride of ten miles in a stage-coach. In a railroad car the passengers are gloomily reticent, as if they expected to be launched into eternity at any moment ; in a stage they indulge in all the fury of gossip, and reveal themselves while praising or censuring others. There were two persons in front of me, mighty in bulk, but apparently too much absorbed in their own reflections to speak to each other. The train, as usual, stopped at Concord. Then one of the giants



turned to the other, and lazily remarked, "Mr. Emerson, I hear, lives in this town."

"Ya-as," was the drawling rejoinder; "and I understand that, in spite of his odd notions, he is a man of *con-sid-er-able* propity."

This apposite judgment was made when Emerson's Essays had been translated into most of the languages of Europe, and when the recognition of his genius was even more cordial abroad than it was among his few thousands of appreciative admirers at home; but the shrewd Yankee who uttered it was more impressed by his thrift than by his thinking. He belonged to the respectable race of *descendentalists*, and was evidently puzzled to understand how a *transcendentalist* could acquire "propity."

On one occasion, in my early acquaintance with Emerson, I was hastily summoned to lecture at a country town some five miles from Boston, because Emerson, who had been expected to occupy the desk, had not signified his acceptance of the invitation. He either had neglected to answer the letter of the committee, or his own note in reply had miscarried. About ten minutes before the lecture was to begin, Emerson appeared. Of course I insisted on having the privilege of listening to him, rather than compel the audience to listen to me. He generously declared that as the mistake seemed to have arisen from his own neglect, I had the right to the platform. When I solemnly assured him that no lecture would be heard that evening in that town unless he delivered it, he,



still somewhat protesting, unrolled his manuscript, and took his place at the desk. The lecture, though perhaps not one of his best lyceum discourses, was better than the best of any other living lecturer. When it was over, he invited me to take a seat in the chaise which had brought him from Boston. I gladly accepted. The horse was, fortunately for me, one of the slowest beasts that ever had the assurance to pretend to convey two persons faster by carriage, from one point to another, than an ordinary pedestrian could accomplish in a meditative walk. The pace was, I think, about two miles an hour. As soon as we got into the chaise, I began to speak of the lecture, and referring to what he had said of the Puritans, I incidentally alluded to the peculiar felicity of his use of the word "grim," and added that I noticed it was a favorite word with him in his published Essays. "Do you say," he eagerly responded, "that I use the word often?" "Yes," I replied, "but never without its being applicable to the class of persons you are characterizing." He reflected a minute or two, and then said, as if he had experienced a pang of intellectual remorse, "The word is probably passing with me into a mannerism, and I must hereafter guard against it,—must banish it from my dictionary."

By this time we had passed out of the town into the long country road which led to Boston. Emerson was in his happiest mood. He entered into a peculiar kind of conversation with his young companion, in which reverie occasionally emerged into soliloquy,

and then again became a real talk between the two, though ever liable to subside into reverie and soliloquy if his interlocutor had tact enough to restrain his own tendency to self-expression. I shall never forget that evening. The moon was nearly at its full, undisturbed by a cloud, and the magical moonlight flooded the landscape and skyscape with its soft, gentle, serene, mystical radiance, making strangely unreal all things that seem so substantial when viewed in the "insolent," revealing glare of the sun. Astronomers tell us that the moon is a dead body, all its central fires burned out, and swinging in space as a lifeless mass of matter, good for nothing except to give us light for about half the nights of every month in the year, or to illustrate the operation of the law of gravitation; but of all the lights in the solar or stellar system it is pre-eminently the idealist and transcendentalist of the tenants of the sky; and I never felt its mystical charm more profoundly than on this ride of two hours with Emerson. The lazy horse seemed to be indulging in the luxury of his own reflections, and was only kept from stopping altogether and setting up as a philosopher on his own account, renouncing his ignominious bondage to harness and bridle, by the occasional idle flap of Emerson's whip on his hide, — a stimulant to exertion which was so light that I thought its full force could not have broken the backbone of an ordinary fly. So we "tooled on." The conversation at last drifted to contemporary actors who assumed to personate lead-

ing characters in Shakspeare's greatest plays. Had I ever seen an actor who satisfied me when he pretended to be Hamlet or Othello, Lear or Macbeth? Yes, I had seen the elder Booth in these characters. Though not perfect, he approached nearer to perfection than any other actor I knew. Nobody, of course, could really satisfy a student of Shakspeare. Still, I thought that the elder Booth had a realizing imagination; that he conceived the nature of the person he embodied in its essential individual qualities; that so firm and true was his imaginative grasp of a character that he preserved the unity of one of Shakspeare's complex natures while giving all the varieties of its manifestation. Macready might be the more popular actor of the two, at least in all "refined" circles; but the trouble with Macready was, that while he was gifted with a good understanding he was strangely deficient in impassioned imagination, and that he accordingly, by a logical process, inferred the character he wished to impersonate by a patient study of Shakspeare's text, and then played the inference.

"Ah," said Emerson, giving a tender touch of his whip to the indolent horse, — an animal which, during the three minutes I consumed in eulogizing Booth, showed a natural disposition to go to sleep, — "I see you are one of the happy mortals who are capable of being carried away by an actor of Shakspeare. Now, whenever I visit the theatre to witness the performance of one of his dramas, I am carried away by the poet. I went last Tuesday to see Macready in

‘Hamlet.’ I got along very well until he came to the passage,—

‘thou, dead corse, again, in complète steel,  
Revisit’st thus the glimpses of the moon,’ —

and then actor, theatre, all vanished in view of that solving and dissolving imagination, which could reduce this big globe and all it inherits into mere ‘glimpses of the moon.’ The play went on, but, absorbed in this one thought of the mighty master, I paid no heed to it.”

What specially impressed me, as Emerson was speaking, was his glance at our surroundings as he slowly uttered, “glimpses of the moon;” for here above us was the same moon which must have given birth to Shakspeare’s thought, its soft rays of consecrating light insinuating a sceptical doubt of the real existence of the world of matter, which, in the fierce glow of the noontide sun, appears so imperturbably conscious of a solid, incontestable reality.

Afterward, in his lecture on Shakspeare, Emerson made use of the thought suggested in our ride by moonlight. He said: “That imagination which dilates the closet he writes in to the world’s dimensions, crowds it with agents in rank and order, as quickly reduces the big reality to be the ‘glimpses of the moon.’” It seems to me that his expression of the thought as it occurred to him when he felt the enchantment of the moonlight palpably present to his eyes and imagination, is better in my version than in



the comparatively cold language in which he afterward embodied it. But in the printed lecture there is one sentence declaring the absolute insufficiency of any actor, in any theatre, to fix attention on himself while uttering Shakspeare's words, which seems to me the most exquisite statement ever made of the magical suggestiveness of Shakspeare's expression. I have often quoted it, but it will bear quotation again and again, as the best prose sentence ever written on this side of the Atlantic: "The recitation begins; one golden word leaps out immortal from all this painted pedantry, *and sweetly torments us with invitations to its own inaccessible homes.*"

Emerson's voice had a strange power, which affected me more than any other voice I ever heard on the stage or on the platform. It was pure thought translated into purely intellectual tone, the perfect music of spiritual utterance. It is impossible to read his verses adequately without bearing in mind his peculiar accent and emphasis; and some of the grandest and most uplifting passages in his prose lose much of their effect unless the reader can recall the tones of his voice,—a voice now, alas! silent on earth forever, but worthy of being heard in that celestial company which he, "a spirit of the largest size and divinest mettle," has now exchanged for his earthly companions. There was nothing sensual, nothing even sensuous, nothing weakly melodious, in his utterance; but his voice had the stern, keen, penetrating sweetness which made it a fit organ for his



self-centred, commanding mind. Yet though peculiar to himself, it had at the same time an impersonal character, as though a spirit were speaking through him. Thus in his lecture on Swedenborg he began with a compact statement of the opinions of the Swedish sage,—opinions which seemed to be wide enough to compel all men, pagans and Christians, to assent to his dogmatic statements. The exposition was becoming monotonous after the lapse of a quarter of an hour. The audience supposed that he was a convert to the Swedenborgian doctrines. At the conclusion of his exposition he paused for half a minute, and then, in his highest, most piercing tones, he put the question, “*Who is* EMANUEL SWEDENBORG?” his voice rising as he accented every syllable. The effect was electric. Many persons in the audience who had begun to betray a decided disposition to go to sleep waked up. The lecturer then proceeded to give, in short, flashing sentences a criticism of the Swedenborgian ideas, which seemed to have bored him as they undoubtedly bored many of his hearers; and everybody present eagerly listened to the objections which rendered it reasonable for them to recognize Swedenborg as a very great representative man, without making it necessary for them to abandon the churches to which they were attached and swell the congregations of those of the New Jerusalem.

Again, after reciting the marvels of Shakspeare’s genius, placing him above all other writers, he came to the consideration of the serious side of this great-

est of poets. What did he teach? "He converted the elements, which waited on his command, into entertainments. He was master of the revels to mankind. Is it not as if one should have, through majestic powers of science, the comets given into his hand, or the planets and their moons, and should draw them from their orbits to glare with the municipal fireworks on a holiday night, and advertise in all towns, 'very superior pyrotechny this evening'?" All this was delivered in an intense and penetrating yet somewhat subdued tone, and it is hardly possible to convey by printers' ink and types the gradual rise of his voice as he added: "One remembers again the trumpet text in the Koran, 'The heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, *think ye we have* CREATED THEM IN JEST?'" It is only by a typographical rise from italics to capitals that the faintest indication can be conveyed of the upward march of his voice as it finally pealed forth in "jest."

In another lecture he had occasion to refer to what Mr. Choate had called "the glittering generalities of the Declaration of Independence." If a printer could put it into the smallest type possible to be read by the aid of the microscope, he could not fitly show the scorn embodied in the first part of the sentence in which Emerson replied; nor could the same printer's largest types suggest an idea of the triumphant tone, shot as from a vocal ten-inch gun, in which he gave the second portion of it: "Glittering generalities! — *rather* BLAZING UBIQUITIES!"

Emerson's generous and thorough appreciation of the genius and character of Henry D. Thoreau was shown in many ways and on many occasions. At my first or second visit to Concord as a lecturer before its Lyceum, he said to me, in the quaint condensed fashion of speech in which he always sketched an original character: "You should know Thoreau. He became disgusted with our monotonous civilization, and went, self-banished, to our Walden woods. There he lives. He built his own hut, cooks his own food, refuses to pay taxes, reads *Æschylus*, abjures models, and is a great man." From my first introduction, Thoreau seemed to me a man who had experienced Nature as other men are said to have experienced religion. An unmistakable courage, sincerity, and manliness breathed in every word he uttered. I once met him and Mr. Alcott in State Street, in the busiest hour of the day, while I was hurrying to a bank. They had paused before a saloon to get a glimpse of the crowds of merchants and brokers passing up and down the street. "Ah!" I laughingly said, after shaking hands, "I see it is eleven o'clock, and you are going to take a drink." Mr. Alcott, in his sweetest and most serene tones, replied for both: "No; vulgar and ordinary stimulants are not for us. But if you can show us a place where we can drink *Bacchus* himself, the soul of the inspiration of the poet and the seer, we shall be your debtors forever." There is hardly any biography recently published more interesting than Mr. Sanborn's life of Thoreau; for Mr.

Sanborn knew him so intimately that he gives us an "interior" view of the remarkable person he has taken for his subject. Indeed, what can be more interesting than the spectacle of a man whose independence was so rooted in his nature that he coolly set up his private opinion against the average opinion of the human race, and contrived so to incorporate his opinion into his daily life that he came out in the end a victor in the contest? And in respect to the sympathy that Nature had for *him* in return for his sympathy with *her*, one feels that he must have been in Emerson's mind when he celebrated, in "Wood Notes," his "forest seer : " —

"It seemed as if the breezes brought him ;  
It seemed as if the sparrows taught him ;  
As if by secret sight he knew  
Where, in far fields, the orchis grew.  
Many haps fall in the field  
Seldom seen by wishful eyes ;  
But all her shows did Nature yield  
To please and win this pilgrim wise.  
He saw the partridge drum in the woods ;  
He heard the woodcock's evening hymn ;  
He found the tawny thrush's broods ;  
*And the shy hawk did wait for him !*  
What others did at distance hear,  
And guessed within the thicket's gloom,  
Was shown to this philosopher,  
And at his bidding seemed to come."

Miss Fredrika Bremer, in her book recording her tour in the United States, took unwarrantable liberties in describing the households of those persons



whose hospitalities she enjoyed. Emerson was specially annoyed at her chatter about him and his family. What vexed him most, however, was her reference to Samuel Hoar, — a man whom Emerson, as well as all other citizens of Concord, held in distinguished honor as the living embodiment of integrity, intelligence, wisdom, piety, and benevolence. Emerson's well-known quatrain, with the simple title "S. H.," is a monument to this good and wise man's memory: —

" With beams December's planets dart  
His cold eye truth and conduct scanned ;  
July was in his sunny heart,  
October in his liberal hand."

Yet this venerable sage, whose native dignity should have shielded him from the impertinence of even a gossip so incorrigible as Miss Bremer, was represented in that lady's book as a garrulous old gentleman, who at his own table, to which she was an invited guest, had made in lieu of the ordinary grace a prayer which she considered so long as to be tiresome. "As if," said Emerson to me, in his deepest indignant tone, — "as if Mr. Hoar was expected to pray for her entertainment!"

He had, from the start, a strong antipathy to "spiritism." When departed spirits, by "knockings" and moving furniture, first began to inform us poor mortals that they were still alive, — alive, however, in a world which appeared, on the whole, to be worse than that from which death had released them, — the great question of immortality was considered by many pious



persons to have obtained new evidences of its truth from these materialistic manifestations. Emerson's feeling was that so exquisitely expressed by Tennyson :

“How pure at heart and sound in head,  
With what divine affections bold,  
Should be the man whose thought would hold  
An hour's communion with the dead !

“In vain shalt thou, or any, call  
The spirits from their golden day,  
Except, like them, thou too canst say,  
'My spirit is at peace with all.'

“They haunt the silence of the breast,  
Imaginations calm and fair,  
The memory like a cloudless air,  
The conscience as a sea at rest.”

Emerson's impatience when the subject came up for discussion in a company of intelligent people was amusing to witness. He was specially indignant at the idea of women adopting spiritism as a profession, and engaging to furnish all people with news of their deceased friends at a shilling a head. The enormous vulgarity of the whole thing impressed him painfully, especially when he was told that some of his own friends paid even the slightest attention to the revelations, as he phrased it, of “those seamstresses turned into sibyls, who charged a pistareen a spasm !” Brougham's well-known remark that the idea of Campbell's writing his life added a new horror to death, was a just anticipation of a terrible fact ; for Campbell did write his life, and made a dreadful

wreck of Brougham's reputation. Happily, Emerson's last days were clouded by a failure of memory, or he might have mourned that his spirit would be called by "mediums" from "its golden day," to furnish the public with information detailing his present "gossip about the celestial politics," translated from the terse and beautiful language in which he was accustomed to speak his thoughts on earth into the peculiar dialect which uneducated mediums generally use in their rapt communion with the spirits of such men as Bacon, Milton, Webster, and Channing, — spirits who, as far as their style of expression and elevation of thought are concerned, appear to have found their immortality a curse; spirits who have dwindled in mental stature just in proportion as they have ascended into the region of incorporeal existence; spirits not made perfect, but decidedly *imperfect* in heaven.

After his return from his second visit to England, in 1847, I had a natural wish to learn his impressions of the distinguished men he had met. His judgment of Tennyson was this, — that he was the most "satisfying" of the men of letters he had seen. He witnessed one of Macaulay's brilliant feats in conversation at a dinner where Hallam was one of the guests. The talk was on the question whether the "additional letters" of Oliver Cromwell, lately published by Carlyle, were spurious or genuine. "For my part," said Emerson, "the suspicious fact about them was this, — that they all seemed written to sustain Mr. Carlyle's

view of Cromwell's character; but the discussion turned on the external evidences of their being forgeries. Macaulay overcame everybody at the table, including Hallam, by pouring out with victorious volubility instances of the use of words in a different meaning from that they bore in Cromwell's time, or by citing words which were not in use at all until half a century later. A question which might have been settled in a few minutes by the consent of a few men of insight, opened a tiresome controversy which lasted during the whole dinner. Macaulay seemed to have the best of it; still, I did not like the arrogance with which he paraded his minute information. But then there was a fire, speed, fury, talent, and effrontery in the fellow which were very taking." When Emerson, on his return, made in his "English Traits" his short, contemptuous criticism on Macaulay as a writer representing the material rather than the spiritual interests of England, it is evident that the verbal bullet hit the object at which it was aimed in the white: "The brilliant Macaulay, who expresses the tone of the English governing classes of the day, explicitly teaches that *good* means good to eat, good to wear, material commodity; that the glory of modern philosophy is its direction or 'fruit,' to yield economical inventions, and that its merit is to avoid ideas and to avoid morals. He thinks it the distinctive merit of the Baconian philosophy in its triumph over the old Platonic, its disentangling the intellect from theories of the all-Fair and the all-Good, and pinning

it down to the making a better sick-chair and a better wine-whey for an invalid, — this not ironically, but in good faith; that ‘solid advantage,’ as he calls it — meaning always sensual benefit — is the only good.” This criticism, though keen, is undoubtedly one-sided. Macaulay felt it. In the height of his fame, in January, 1850, he writes in his diary: “Many readers give credit for profundity to whatever is obscure, and call all that is perspicuous shallow. But, *coragio!* and think of A. D. 2850. Where will your Emersons be then?” Well, it may be confidently predicted they will at least march abreast of the Macaulays.

In all Emerson’s experience as a lecturer there was only one occasion when he received that tribute to a radical orator’s timely eloquence which is expressed in hisses. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law stirred him into unwonted moral passion and righteous wrath. He accepted an invitation to deliver a lecture in Cambridgeport, called for the purpose of protesting against that infamous anomaly in jurisprudence and insult to justice which had the impudence to call itself a law. Those who sympathized with him were there in force; but a score or two of foolish Harvard students came down from the college to the hall where the lecture was delivered, determined to assert “the rights of the South,” and to preserve the threatened Union of the States. They were the rowdiest, noisiest, most brainless set of young gentlemen that ever pretended to be engaged in studying “the humanities” at the chief



university of the country. Their only arguments were hisses and groans, whenever the most illustrious of American men of letters uttered an opinion which expressed the general opinion of the civilized world. If he quoted Coke, Holt, Blackstone, Mansfield, they hissed all these sages of the law because their judgments came from the illegal lips of Emerson. It was curious to watch him, as at each point he made he paused to let the storm of hisses subside. The noise was something he had never heard before; there was a queer, quizzical, squirrel-like or bird-like expression in his eye as he calmly looked round to see what strange human animals were present to make such sounds; and when he proceeded to utter another indisputable truth, and it was responded to by another chorus of hisses, he seemed absolutely to enjoy the new sensation he experienced, and waited for these signs of disapprobation to stop altogether before he resumed his discourse. The experience was novel; still there was not the slightest tremor in his voice, not even a trace of the passionate resentment which a speaker under such circumstances and impediments usually feels, and which urges him into the cheap retort about serpents, but a quiet waiting for the time when he should be allowed to go on with the next sentence. During the whole evening he never uttered a word which was not written down in the manuscript from which he read. Many of us at the time urged Emerson to publish the lecture. Ten or fifteen



years after, when he was selecting material for a new volume of *Essays*, I entreated him to include in it the old lecture at Cambridgeport; but he, after deliberation, refused, feeling probably that, being written under the impulse of the passion of the day, it was no fit and fair summary of the characters of the statesmen he assailed. Of one passage in the lecture I preserve a vivid remembrance. After affirming that the eternal law of righteousness, which rules all created things, nullified the enactment of Congress, and after citing the opinions of several magnates of jurisprudence that immoral laws are void and of no effect, he slowly added, in a scorching and biting irony of tone which no words can describe, "but still a little Episcopalian clergyman assured me yesterday that the Fugitive Slave Law must be obeyed and enforced." After the lapse of thirty years, the immense humor of bringing all the forces of nature, all the principles of religion, and all the decisions of jurists to bear with their Atlas weight on the shoulders of one poor little conceited clergyman to crush him to atoms, and he in his innocence not conscious of it, makes me laugh now as all the audience laughed then, the belligerent Harvard students included.

Emerson's good sense was so strong that it always seemed to be specially awakened in the company of those who were most in sympathy with his loftiest thinking. Thus when "the radical philosophers" were gathered one evening at his house, the conver-

sation naturally turned on the various schemes of benevolent people to reform the world. Each person present had a panacea to cure all the distempers of society. For hours the talk ran on; and before bed-time came, all the sin and misery of the world had been apparently expelled from it, and our planet was reformed and transformed into an abode of human angels, and virtue and happiness were the lot of each human being. Emerson listened, but was sparing of speech. Probably he felt, with Lamennais, that if facts did not resist thoughts, the earth would in a short time become uninhabitable. At any rate, he closed the *séance* with the remark: "A few of us old codgers meet at the fireside on a pleasant evening, and in thought and hope career, balloon-like, over the whole universe of matter and mind, finding no resistance to our theories, because we have, in the sweet delirium of our thinking, none of those obstructive facts which face the practical reformer the moment he takes a single forward step; then we go to bed, and the pity of it is we wake up in the morning feeling that we are the same poor old imbeciles we were before!"

A transcendentalist is sometimes compelled, by what Cowley calls "the low conveniencies of fate," to subordinate the principles of his system of thought to the practical exigency of the hour. A curious illustration of this fact occurred, some fifteen or twenty years ago, in the early days of the "Saturday Club." After some preliminary skirmishing, Emerson asked

Agassiz to give him a short exposition of his leading ideas as a naturalist in respect to what was known of the genesis of things. Agassiz, in his vehement, rapid way, began at the microscopic "cell," beyond which no discovered instrument of investigation could go, and proceeded to show the gradual ascent from this "cell" to the highest forms of animal life. He took about half an hour in making his condensed statement, and then Emerson's turn began. "But, Mr. Agassiz, I see that all your philosophy is under the law of succession; it is genealogical; it is based on the reality of time. But you must know that some of us believe with Kant that time is merely a subjective form of human thought, having no objective existence." Then suddenly taking out his watch, and learning that he had only fifteen minutes to get to the Fitchburg Railroad in order to be in "time" to catch the last train to Concord on that afternoon, he took his hat, swiftly donned his overcoat, and as he almost rushed from the room he assured Agassiz that he would discuss the subject at some other "time," when he was less pressed by his engagements at home. For years afterward, when the transcendentalist met the naturalist at the club, I watched in vain for a recurrence of the controversy. I do not think it was ever re-opened between them.

Many of Emerson's friends and acquaintances thought that his sense of humor was almost as keen as his sense of Beauty and his sense of Right. I do not

remember an instance in my conversations with him, when the question came up of his being not understood, — or, what is worse, misunderstood by the public, — that he did not treat the matter in an exquisitely humorous way, telling the story of his defeats in making himself comprehended by the audience or the readers he addressed as if the misapprehensions of his meaning were properly subjects of mirth, in which he could heartily join. This is the test of the humorist, that he can laugh *with* those who laugh *at* him. For example, on one occasion I recollect saying that of all his college addresses I thought the best was that on "The Method of Nature," delivered before the Society of the Adelphi, in Waterville College, Maine, August 11, 1841. He then gave me a most amusing account of the circumstances under which the oration was delivered. It seems that after conceiving the general idea of the address, he banished himself to Nantasket Beach, secluded himself for a fortnight in a room in a public house the windows of which looked out on the ocean, moving from his chamber and writing-desk only to take early morning and late evening walks on the beach; and thought, at the end, he had produced something which was worthy of being listened to even by the Society of the Adelphi. At that time a considerable portion of the journey to Waterville had to be made by stage. He arrived late in the evening, travel-worn and tired out, when almost all the sober inhabitants of Waterville had gone to bed. It appeared

that there was some doubt as to the particular citizen's house at which he was to pass the night. "The stage-driver," said Emerson, "stopped at one door, rapped loudly; a window was opened, something in a night-gown asked what he wanted; the stage-driver replied that he had inside a man who *said* he was to deliver the lit-ra-rye oration to-morrow, and thought he was to stop there; but the night-gown disappeared, with the chilling remark that he was not to stay at *his* house. Then we went to another and still another dwelling, rapped, saw similar night-gowns and heard similar voices at similar raised windows; and it was only after repeated disturbances of the peace of the place that the right house was hit, where I found a hospitable reception. The next day I delivered my oration, which was heard with cold, silent, unresponsive attention, in which there seemed to be a continuous unuttered rebuke and protest. The services were closed by prayer, and the good man who prayed, prayed for the orator, but also warned his hearers against heresies and wild notions, which appeared to me of that kind for which I was held responsible. The address was really written in the heat and happiness of what I thought a real inspiration; but all the warmth was extinguished in that lake of iced water." The conversation occurred so long ago that I do not pretend to give Emerson's exact words, but this was the substance of his ludicrous statement of the rapture with which he had written what was so frigidly received.



He seemed intensely to enjoy the fun of his material discomforts and his spiritual discomfiture.

Emerson had some strange tastes and some equally strange distastes in regard to poets. Usually his criticism was wonderfully acute and accurate, compressing into a few significant words what other critics would fail to convey in an elaborate analysis. He darted, by a combination of insight and instinct, to the exact point in a poet's writings where the poetry in him was best embodied and expressed; and his reading of the passages which had most impressed him excelled that of the most accomplished professional elocutionist I ever listened to. But he never could endure Shelley, and declared that if the objections of practical men to poetry rested on such poets as Shelley, he should cordially agree with them. He admitted, of course, the beauty of "The Skylark" and "The Cloud;" but as an apostle of hope and health and cheer, he could not pardon the note of lamentation which runs through Shelley's poetry, and thought that his gifts of imagination and melody, remarkable as they were, were no atonement for his unmanly wailing and sobbing over the ills of existence. A poet, he said, should invigorate, not depress, the soul. It was in vain to tell him that such ethereal powers of imagination and sentiment as Shelley possessed should be considered apart from the direction they happened to take, owing to the unfortunate circumstances of his life. No; he would discard such sick souls from his sympathy, as he would discard all

sick bodies. He showed always a comical disgust of sick people generally. Everybody who heard his lecture called "Considerations by the Way," must remember the peculiar force and bitterness with which he described sickness "as a cannibal which eats up all the life and youth it can lay hold of, and absorbs its own sons and daughters. I figure it as a pale, wailing, distracted phantom, absolutely selfish, heedless of what is good and great, attentive to its own sensations, losing its soul, and afflicting other souls with meanness and mopings, and with ministrations to its voracity of trifles. Dr. Johnson severely said, 'Every man is a rascal as soon as he is sick.'" And then he went on to say that we should give the sick every aid, but not give them "ourselves." Then followed a cruelly wise remark which shocked many in the audience, and the real import of which was taken only by a few. "I once asked a clergyman in a country town who were his companions? what men of ability he saw? He replied that he spent his time with the sick and the dying. I said he seemed to me to need quite other company, and all the more that he had this; for if people were sick and dying to any purpose, we would leave all and go to them, but, as far as I had observed, they were as frivolous as the rest, and sometimes much more frivolous." Every one who has observed how many conscientious clergymen are converted into nerveless moral valetudinarians, losing all power of communicating healthy moral life, by constantly acting as spiritual nurses to the sick, com-

plaining, and ever-dying but never dead members of their parishes, must acknowledge the half-truth in this apparently harsh statement.

The feeling that it is the duty of the teacher of his fellow-men, whether preacher, poet, romancer, or philosopher, to console by cheering and invigorating them, entered into all Emerson's criticism. When the "Scarlet Letter," in many respects the greatest romance of the century, was published, he conceded that it was a work of power; "but," he said to me, with a repulsive shrug of the shoulders as he uttered the word, "it is ghastly." It seemed to me that "ghostly" would be a more truthful characterization of it; but it was impossible to remove from his mind the general impression any book had left on it by arguments. "Ghastly!" he repeated — "ghastly!" He seemed quietly impregnable to any considerations respecting the masterly imaginative analysis which Hawthorne had displayed in depicting the spiritual moods of his guilty hero and heroine, and his keen perception of the outlying spiritual laws which, being violated in their sin, reacted with such terrible force in their punishment. The book left an unpleasant impression on him; that was enough, as it was enough to lead him to condemn Goethe's "Faust."

In judging of works of immensely less importance, which only excited his ridicule, his irony was often delicious. Then there were popular books whose daily sale exceeded that of all his own volumes in ten years; these he spoke of with admirable humor and

good-humor. Talking with him once on the character of the first Napoleon, I asked him if he had read the Rev. Mr. Abbott's history of the exploits and objects of the Emperor. "Yes," he dryly answered; "and it has given to me an altogether original idea of that notable man. It seems to teach that the great object of Napoleon in all his wars was to establish in benighted Europe our New England system of Sunday-schools. A book like that is invaluable; it revolutionizes all our notions of historical men."

In such recollections of Emerson as I have here recorded there has been, of course, no attempt to portray his character as a whole, but simply to exhibit some aspects of it. There was a side of his nature, or rather the very centre of his nature — his "heart of heart" — on which I suppose even his intimate friends (with whom I do not presume to rank myself) would speak with a certain reserve. Dr. Bartol, one of these friends, whose beautiful tribute to Emerson has been published, hints of the loneliness of thought in which a large portion of his life was probably passed. The incommunicable elements in Emerson's spiritual experience must, indeed, have exceeded what he felt himself capable of communicating, not to speak of that portion he was indisposed to communicate. In one of his most characteristic essays there is a pregnant sentence in which he declares that in its highest moods "the soul gives itself, alone, original, and pure, to the Lonely, Original, and Pure, who on that condition gladly inhabits, leads, and speaks through it."

This mystic communion of the soul with its source had with him a solemnity so sacred that it must needs be secret ; it either exalted his mortal nature into a "beatitude past utterance," or depressed it with ominous misgivings and "obstinate questionings" which could find no adequate outlet in words ; and though we detect in the noblest passages of his writings traces of this immediate personal communion with the Highest and the Divine, it is doubtful if he ever spoke of it to his nearest relatives and friends. In this Emerson differed from most men of profound religious genius, who are sometimes garrulous on those points where he was inexorably mute. He never exclaimed, as other pious souls have exclaimed, "See what the Lord has done for *me* !" His reticence was the modesty of spiritual manliness. What he felt on such high matters, he felt to be indescribable and unutterable ; but how awful must have been at times his sense of spiritual loneliness, his lips austere shut even when the closest, dearest, and most trusted companions of his soul delicately hinted their wish he would speak ; but he died, and made no sign.

Still, at just one remove from the sacred secrecy of his inmost individual consciousness and experience, he is ever found to be the frankest of writers. Matthew Arnold has revived a phrase originally used by Swift in his "Battle of the Books," and made it stand as a mark of the perfection of intellectual character. It is curious that this phrase "sweetness and light" should have been uttered by the greatest cynical apostle of bitterness and gloom who



has left a record of his genius in English literature, — and also uttered, so far as the side he took is concerned, in an ignominious literary brawl, in which he was the champion of Temple, Boyle, and Atterbury, against Bentley, the greatest scholar in Europe. Bentley was of course victor in the contest, even in the opinion of all candid scholars at first opposed to him.

But “sweetness and light” are precious and inspiring only so far as they express the essential sweetness of the disposition of the thinker, and the essential illuminating power of his intelligence. Emerson’s greatness came from his character. Sweetness and light streamed *from* him because they were *in* him. In everything he thought, wrote, and did we feel the presence of a personality as vigorous and brave as it was sweet; and the particular radical thought he at any time expressed derived its power to animate and illuminate other minds from the might of the manhood which was felt to be within and behind it. To “sweetness and light” he therefore added the prime quality of fearless manliness.

If the force of Emerson’s character was thus inextricably blended with the force of all his faculties of intellect and imagination, and the refinement of all his sentiments, we have still to account for the peculiarities of his genius, and to answer the question, Why do we instinctively apply the epithet “Emersonian” to every characteristic passage in his writings? We are told that he was the last in a long

line of clergymen, his ancestors, and that the modern doctrine of heredity accounts for the impressive emphasis he laid on the moral sentiment; but that does not solve the puzzle why he unmistakably differed in his nature and genius from all other Emersons. An imaginary genealogical chart of descent connecting him with Confucius or Gotama would be more satisfactory. At the time he acquired notoriety but had not yet achieved fame, it was confidently asserted in all Boston circles that his brother Charles—the “calm, chaste scholar” celebrated by Holmes—was greatly his superior in ability, and would, had he not died early, have entirely eclipsed Ralph. Emerson himself, the most generous and loving of brothers, always inclined to this opinion. But there is not an atom of evidence that Charles, had he lived, would have produced works which would be read by a choice company of thinkers and scholars all over the world, which would be translated into all the languages of Europe, and would be prized in London and Edinburgh, in Berlin and Vienna, in Rome and Paris, as warmly as they were in Boston and New York. What distinguishes *the* Emerson was his *exceptional* genius and character,—that something in him which separated him from all other Emersons, as it separated him from all other eminent men of letters, and impressed every intelligent reader with the feeling that he was not only “original, but aboriginal.” Some traits of his mind and character may be traced back to his ancestors,

but what doctrine of heredity can give us the genesis of his genius? Indeed, the safest course to pursue is to quote his own words, and despairingly confess that it is the nature of genius "to spring, like the rainbow daughter of Wonder, from the invisible; to abolish the past, and refuse all history."

## MOTLEY, THE HISTORIAN.

IN the satires of Dryden and Pope, the god or goddess of Dulness descends on some tenant of Grub Street, and after congratulating him on his success in making stupidity popular, commonly ends with the injunction, "Be thou dull!" The meaning is, that he who has raised himself to notoriety by feeble thoughts embodied in bad verses should continue true to that power whose aid has lifted him to a transient eminence. In this way Dryden and Pope wrought their revenges on what they called the dunces, — on Flecknoe and Shadwell, on Cibber and Theobald, — in short, on all authors who were the enemies of Mr. Dryden and Mr. Pope. If we could conceive of some more benignant deity descending on the cradle of Oliver Wendell Holmes, his injunction to the infant would undoubtedly have been this: "Be thou bright!" It is certainly true that Holmes has never been able to escape from the fate which doomed him to be brilliant. He has made desperate attempts to be dull, for he has written a score of medical addresses, in which the latest results of medical discovery have been stated with all due regard to those terrible Latin names of diseases which

frighten half to death the tenants of most sick-beds; but into these addresses he has insinuated strokes of wit and humor which force smiles or laughter from those healthy men who are yet to know the awful significance of the aches and pains which modern medicine is exerting all its skill to alleviate. On the philosophy of the mind, as connected with physiology, he has shown himself one of the boldest and most original thinkers on facts which the latest science has established. The books in which these facts and the logical inferences from them are stated at length are to the unprofessional reader the dulllest of all books; yet as Autocrat, Poet, and Professor of the Breakfast Table he has made them fascinating to thousands of readers whom the elaborate treatises of Maudsley and Carpenter would disgust. His little octodecimo on the "Mechanism of Morals" is a masterpiece of its kind, condensing the result of his laborious professional life in one of the most charming contributions ever made to practical ethics. As a serious poet the stream of his sentiment flows over golden sands, sparkling with pathos,—if such a phrase can be allowed; and in those verses in which he gives full play to the ludicrous eccentricities of his fancy and imagination he is never a mere versifier of jokes, but always a witty and humorous *poet*. In his last work, the biography of his friend Motley, abounding as it does in felicitous strokes of characterization, as well as in calm, judicial estimates of evidence, he never loses his old attractiveness.



Indeed, whatever may be said of Dr. Holmes's views on some of the deepest subjects which can command the attention of thoughtful minds, nobody ever accused him of being dull. The self-imposed reticences in this charming sketch of Motley's career do not prevent him from piquant disclosures which present the historian of liberty in his true character as a singularly brave, honest, and noble gentleman. The man had the usual infirmities of men; but that he was a grand specimen of cultured American manhood, as well as a notable example of American intelligence, cannot be doubted by anybody who enjoyed the pleasure of his acquaintance, or by anybody who has studied his works. Manhood — free, resolute, intrepid, and somewhat disdainful manhood — is the impression of Motley derived from the reading of his histories; and it was eminently the same impression which familiar knowledge of him stamped on the minds of his friends. Dr. Holmes's biography reflects the feelings and judgments of all these friends, whether in the United States or in Europe.

John Lothrop Motley was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, April 15, 1814. His biographer tells us that the historian's life was saved a hundred years before he was born. One of his maternal ancestors, a child living in Haverhill, Massachusetts, was hidden by a housemaid under a wash-tub in the cellar of her father's house when it was assailed by Indians in 1708. The savages missed their prey by this comical contrivance, and Motley thus became a

possible human being a hundred and six years before he entered life. His father was a prosperous Boston merchant who had Irish blood in his veins, and his mother was a daughter of that race of Lothrop which has given so many excellent Protestant clergymen to New England churches. Thomas Motley, the father, is still remembered in Boston as one of the finest of that old school of commercial men who were prominent in society as well as in commerce, and in whom the sagacity of the merchant was combined with the manners and the sentiments of the accomplished and genial gentleman. The mother, by the testimony of all who knew her, was remarkable for her somewhat regal beauty, for "the charm of her serene and noble presence," and for the admirable way in which she performed all the duties of a matron. The son was one of those pre-eminently handsome boys who, as the world goes, seem doomed to be ruined because fortune has saved them from laboring for a living, and Nature has been prodigal in lavishing upon them physical beauty. When Motley had grown to man's estate, Lady Byron declared that he more resembled her husband than any person she had ever met; but Wendell Phillips, his playmate and classmate, objects to this opinion on the ground that Motley was handsomer than Byron. And here it may be well to state that Mr. Phillips, though the greatest iconoclast of institutions and reputations that modern New England has ever seen, has always been exceedingly tender to

Motley, though Motley must have often offended him by the course he took in political affairs. It may also be affirmed that Motley never said a harsh word of Phillips. The affection between them was so close that though they took widely divergent roads, which led eventually however to the same goal, each instinctively recognized the integrity of the other, while they seemed diametrically opposed in methods as well as in aims. There can be no clearer evidence than this of Motley's strong hold on the hearts of all his classmates during the "ups and downs" of his subsequent career.

The beautiful boy was saved from being spoiled by a combination in his nature of an immense intellectual ambition with a corresponding self-distrust. To the end of his life he was consumed with a desire to perform great things, and to the end of his life he was painfully sensible that he had not come up to his lofty ideal. Like many other young men of genius, he was desultory in his studies, and in school and college never reached the standard of "the good boy" or the diligent student. His intellect developed by a process of intellectual irritation. A certain swiftness of mind, catching quickly at the spirit of what he studied, but neglecting the orderly technicalities which denote the progress of a student in his class, distinguished his course through school and college. All his schoolmates and classmates had immense confidence in the brilliancy of his talents, but his "grade" did not correspond to his reputa-

tion. His fellow-students were also sometimes offended by the almost cynical haughtiness of his behavior. Still his reserve would so often give way to a hilarious sympathy with their pursuits that he never lost popularity amid all the eccentricities of seclusion in which he indulged. His great distinction, in which he excelled all his playmates and classmates, was his knowledge of foreign languages. His early familiarity with German impressed even George Bancroft while Motley was a boy in his school at Round Hill; and afterward, when Motley was a student in Harvard College, an address by him on Goethe in one of the college exhibitions was so good as to induce such a trained scholar as Joseph Cogswell to send it to Madame Goethe. Her reply was significant. "I wish," she said, "to see the first book that young man will write."

After leaving Harvard College he spent two years in Europe, studying in the universities both of Berlin and Göttingen. In the latter university he made the acquaintance of a young man who afterward became the greatest of modern statesmen, — Bismarck, — and the acquaintance ripened into a personal friendship which continued until Motley's death. Dr. Holmes prints a letter from Bismarck's secretary, in which this friendship is recorded in cordial terms. "The most striking feature of his handsome and delicate appearance," says Bismarck, "was uncommonly large and beautiful eyes. He never entered a drawing-room without exciting the curiosity and sympathy of the

ladies." The biographer does not add that as university students they were once arrested and lodged in the same guard-house by a few superserviceable policemen of Berlin, on the charge of disturbing the peace of that city. The amount of the offence consisted in singing a little too loudly as they were returning from a students' festival. In the after meetings of Bismarck and Motley, when the former had become a disturber of the peace indeed, this occurrence probably was an enjoyable topic of conversation. Being at the time "fellow-lodgers in the house No. 161 Friedrich Strasse," living in the closest intimacy, "sharing meals and out-door exercise," they doubtless contrived to endure that night's confinement with philosophical composure.

On his return to the United States in 1834, Motley gave no extraordinary evidence of the wisdom acquired by his German studies, except his marriage, in 1837, to the beautiful and intelligent Mary Benjamin,—a lady beloved by everybody who knew her, and whom he may be said to have won as his wife against a score of brilliant competitors." Dr. Holmes remarks of this admirable woman, that those who remember her find it difficult to speak of her amiability, her sincerity, her frankness, her sister-like feeling for the many young men who could never aspire to be her lovers, with "the common terms of praise they award to the good and the lovely." Certainly no wife of a man of letters was ever more warmly loved or more deeply mourned by her hus-



band. While she lived she was his companion in every respect, — the companion of his intellect as well as of his heart. Indeed, her whole life was blended with his, and it may be mentioned as one of the felicities of his career, as far as his happiness and not his fame was concerned, that her death anticipated his own only by a short period. The intellectual irritability of the husband, never satisfied with what he had done, yet feeling that there was no adequate appreciation in some of the social circles in which he moved of what his genius and toil had accomplished, was charmingly contrasted with the soft, sweet manners of the wife, proud of the just glory of her husband, yet tolerant of the ignorant “fashionables” who knew him to be a celebrity, but were as blind to the patient labor as to the vivid genius on which the celebrity was founded. The good wife walked by his side through life, cheering and animating him in all his noble ambitions, rejoicing in the successes of his literary and diplomatic career, while she softened their occasional mortifications, and never losing her love and trust and pride in him until they were parted by death. Literary history has no more beautiful record of wifely devotion. It is probable that even he never fully appreciated what a beneficent angel she had been to him, until, broken in body and mind, he mourned unavailingly over her grave.

On his return from Germany Motley had some vague connection with the profession of the law, as it

was *not* practised in the city of Boston. He could not even boast, as Macaulay boasted, of having had one client. He was in easy circumstances, a brilliant member of the best Boston society, fortunate in his domestic relations, and seemingly doomed to be an elegant do-nothing, sauntering away his existence in the learned idleness of such students as read books merely to gratify their intellectual curiosity, or to gather materials for animated conversation with amateurs in literature as indolent as themselves. But he was really impelled all this time by an almost morbid literary ambition, which found its first expression in a kind of psychological autobiography which he called a novel, and which he published in 1839, under the title of "Morton's Hope." The failure of this book was complete and almost ignominious, in spite of many admirable passages both of reflection and description, the merit of which was apparent amid all the anarchy of the narrative. It exhibited in an exaggerated form a mental defect which is more or less visible in his histories, — namely, a tendency to treat subordinate details with such fulness and richness as somewhat to interfere with a clear perception of the main design. In "Morton's Hope" this defect was so prominent as to enable scores of people, who were incompetent to write any half-dozen of its brilliant paragraphs, to sneer at the work as a whole. "Have you heard," said a wit of the family of Morton to his acquaintance, "that our friend Motley's failure is 'Morton's Hope'?" Motley himself came to hate

his own book so much that it was dangerous to refer to it in his presence. What he probably most disliked in it was the compound of Byronism, Bulwerism, and *Vivian Greyism* which marked its general spirit and tone. As soon as a true scholar strenuously devotes himself to the task of exploring the obscure records of history, and of reproducing the great men and events of the past, he feels ashamed of giving emphasis to his own individual caprices of thought and emotion. He becomes absorbed in the contemplation of the actual wrongs and sufferings of mankind, so that the petty grievances of his own lot shrink and shrivel into comparative insignificance as viewed through the blaze of fires that have consumed heroes and martyrs. It was a merciful Providence which led Motley to select for the hero of his first history William the Silent. His sensitiveness so apt to degenerate into petulance, his self-assertion so strangely mingled with self-distrust, ceased to vex him as he came into daily contact, morally and mentally, with the character of such a miracle of fortitude and self-abnegation as the first William of Orange. It may here be added that in this forlorn novel of "Morton's Hope" Motley indicated that early passion to explore the *sources* of history which afterward impelled him to wander over Europe in search of original materials for the histories which now bear his name. The dust of two or three centuries remained undisturbed on hundreds of important manuscripts in European collections until it was rudely scattered by this inde-

fatigable American student. That he was not intellectually suffocated by the dust he had raised was due to the fact that in him the fine instincts and intelligence of the artist disposed and harmonized the accumulations and discoveries of the drudge.

In 1841 Motley received the appointment of secretary of legation to the Russian mission; but after a few months' residence in St. Petersburg he resigned the post and returned to Boston. For five years he was engaged in a variety of occupations, among which his historical novel of "Merry Mount" may be specially mentioned as an attempt to make his historical studies available for the purpose of romantic creation. "Merry Mount" (not published until 1849), though it obtained some slight recognition, was not on the whole a literary success. He came to the conclusion that he could not rival Walter Scott and Cooper; that what imagination he possessed was the imagination of the historian who reproduces, rather than that of the romancer who both reproduces and creates; and he was confirmed in this impression by the success of an article on Peter the Great which appeared in the "North American Review" for October, 1845. Dr. Holmes lingers lovingly over this paper, indicating, as it does, some of the talent for the picturesque of the historian who was yet to be. Had it been published in the "Edinburgh Review," it would certainly have attracted general attention on both sides of the Atlantic; but the "North American" at that time was so

feebly supported financially that some of us who wrote for it at a dollar a page were wont to call it the Mount Auburn of literature, affording a most beautiful mausoleum wherein an article could be buried. Motley's historical sketch of Peter the Great, though all alive in itself, could not escape being decently wrapped in the cerements of that eminently well-printed, that eminently good, that eminently respectable, and that eminently uncirculated quarterly. Those who have caught the tone of Motley's style in his histories must be constantly reminded of it in re-reading this article in the "North American." Charles the Twelfth of Sweden is characterized as the "crowned gladiator." "I know," said Peter, "the Swedes will have the advantage of us for a considerable time, but they will teach us at length to beat them;" and afterward comes that fine touch, in reference to Peter's apprenticeship in the art of ship-building, of the "colossal puerility of the Russian marine." Again, Peter, the undisputed proprietor of a quarter of the globe, is represented as opening his eyes to the responsibilities of his position, and as having "voluntarily descended from his throne for the noble purpose of qualifying himself to reascend it." But perhaps the most striking characteristic of Motley's insidiously insulting and cavalier way of disregarding the dignity of history, when dignity stands in the way of reality and fact, is to be found in this sentence: "The Normans had, to be sure, in the eleventh century, taken possession of the Russian government with the same *gentleman-like*



*effrontery* with which, at about the same time, they had seated themselves upon every throne in Europe." That phrase, "gentleman-like effrontery," never reappears in Motley's histories; but the wit of the statement is peculiar to the wit of Motley throughout the nine octavos in which he appears as the champion of liberty against oppression. His keen scorn is even more deadly than his impassioned invectives, whenever he has a tyrant or bigot to demolish. He makes him detestable — that is easy; but he also makes him ridiculous, and that can only be done by such unexpected strokes of wit as that we have quoted. The emperors, kings, archdukes, dukes, counts, and other select specimens of human kind who appear in Motley's pages are engaged in a war with the people. *They* are gentlemen; those they oppress are merely producers of wealth, on whom gentlemen, however, must depend for subsistence; but all the rights of the plebeians, whether in the property created by their labor or in the thoughts created by their minds, must be discarded as of no account when noble or pope decides with "gentleman-like effrontery" that they have neither the right to profit by their own industry nor to think by the exercise of their own brains. Motley was struck by the folly as well as the guilt of these pretenders to make merchandise of men. He was convinced that what is called the people of any age outvalued all its rulers. By patient study of history he was inspired with an ambition to vindicate the popular view of human rights and duties against

the autocratic, the monarchical, the aristocratic view. Individually, he was the most fastidious of human beings. He had a genuine horror of vulgarity in all its forms. He came, however, to the conclusion that the so-called "vulgar" constituted the most important portion of the human race; and casting aside all the prejudices of education, of caste, taste, and all the conventional sentiments current in the circles in which he moved, he ached to become the historian of human liberty in some era where aristocracy and democracy were most violently opposed, and where the event of the struggle was of world-wide importance. He fixed on the revolt of the Netherlands against the tyranny of Philip the Second of Spain as his subject, and to this contest he devoted his mature intellectual life.

He felt convinced that modern civilization, as we know it, depended on the success of those Dutch burghers, traders, sailors, and fishermen in their war against the impudent attempt of Spain to dominate Europe; and with a "gentleman-like effrontery" of the true, intrepid kind, he entered upon a crusade against the conventional gentlemen whom he considered to be the enemies of the human race. What he scorned in that "refined" society in which he moved was its tendency to become fossilized in certain notions of gentility, and its incapacity to appreciate those great movements of the human heart and mind which prove that humanity is alive, and which it is the pleasure, the business, and the glory of the

historian to investigate. One of his acquaintances was a curious specimen of a class of men who have no consciousness of this incessant movement. He really thought that the course of affairs since the deluge had come to a "finality" in the best society of Boston. There it not only should stop, but *had* stopped. On once being asked what he thought of the new temperance reform, he sublimely replied: "As to what the lower-class, moral people think of the subject I know nothing; but among the gentlemen of my acquaintance there is but one opinion, and that opinion is decidedly unfavorable." Motley despised all forms and shades of this social conceit, and the more of it which was thrust upon his attention, the more fiercely democratic he became in sentiment and belief. He was a gentleman to the innermost core of his being, — a gentleman by nature, by culture, by refinement of thought, by refinement of sensibility, by instinctive repugnance to bad manners and coarse-grained men; but to him the worst possible vulgarity was the vulgarity of the conventionally polite, who think they are gentlemen because they despise nine-tenths or ninety-nine hundredths of the human race on the ground that they do not belong to their peculiar social class. Motley sometimes raged against this vulgarity, sometimes laughed at it; but whether he inveighed or satirized, he ever considered a man who held such ignoble sentiments as no gentleman. Indeed, it is one of the great offices of history to teach "the curled darlings" of the state how small and inconsiderable

they are as they appear in the grand drama of a nation's life.

As early as 1846 Motley's attention was strongly drawn to the subject of the Dutch Republic, and he began collecting materials for a history of it. The more he investigated, the more he became convinced of the interest, the importance, the grandeur of the theme. He saw before him a comparatively unoccupied ground of modern history, which had never been treated with that exhaustive research into original materials by which each of the great contemporary historians of our time had won his fame in the special subject he had treated. He devoured everything that was in print relating to the history of the Netherlands, but he knew that no historical reputation could be reached by compilation, though the compiler should be as great a master of fluent narrative as Irving or Prescott, or as fertile in novel ideas as Guizot or Grote. He felt that he must be a discoverer as well as a narrator and thinker, an antiquary as well as an artist. Filled with his subject, his soul glowed at the thought of making an important addition to history, and he braced up his will to undertake the lowest offices of that obscure drudgery which had ended in making Thierry a blind paralytic, with no organ alive in him but his brain, and which had tested the enthusiasm and fortitude of every modern historian worthy of the name. There was no question as to the fact that the bright, jovial, quick-witted Motley, whose conversation was the charm of every select dinner

party, and whose last epigram was the talk of the town,<sup>1</sup> had deliberately made up his mind to be as indefatigable in industry as he was acknowledged to be keen in wit and swift in intelligence. He had a definite plan, to which he proposed to dedicate his life. What could arrest him in carrying it out? What could prevent him from realizing the proud anticipations conveyed in the lines of his friend?—

“Let us hear the proud story that time has bequeathed  
From lips that are warm with the freedom they breathed;  
Let him summon its tyrants and tell us their doom,  
Though he sweep the black past like Van Tromp with  
his broom!”

Now the lives of literary and scientific men are sometimes but too full of the rivalries engendered by vanity, and by contests for precedence in discovery. The most humorous exemplification of these infirmities of noble minds is found in the case of the Philadelphia scientist who had the misfortune to discover a new species of rat. On that Rat he based his claim to scientific renown. Anybody who doubted his claim of squatter sovereignty or right of eminent domain over that Rat was his personal enemy. Meanwhile his brother scientists, emulous of his reputation as a discoverer, began to question his right to claim that Rat as exclusively his own. From obscure doubts as to his priority in observation they proceeded by degrees to question whether the Rat was really a new species.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, here is one specimen: “Give me,” he said, “the luxuries of life, and I will do without the necessities.”



They then asserted that whether it was new or not, no less than five scientists of equal eminence had anticipated him in its discovery. Each of these five, of course, set up his separate howl that the Rat was exclusively his. The original discoverer went about everywhere shrieking that a combination of scientific liars and blackguards had combined to rob him of the glory of his Rat. The first effect was to split the "Wistar parties" into vehement and virulent factions. Thence the contagion spread into the fashionable circles of Philadelphia, and young maidens even signalized their first appearance in society by chattering with beautiful volubility on the superior claims of this or that dear love of a *savant* to put this Rat into the possessive case. Suddenly the Rat — who appears, to do him justice, to have been what Mr. Artemus Ward would have styled "an amoosin' little cuss" — disappeared. Then society was shaken to its foundations. "You have stolen *my* Rat!" was shouted from six persons at once, — the first discoverer being of course the strongest in respect to sharpness and pertinacity of screech and scream. The contest only ended by the placing of the whole six in a hospital of incurables, where, it is to be hoped, the escaped Rat demurely surveyed them all from his philosophic hole, wondering, perhaps, in that rat's head of his, whether his race was likely to increase in intelligence by that course of evolution through which rat brains in the distant future were to become similar to the brains deposited in the heads he now gazed upon from his

snug loop-hole of retreat. You can almost hear him squeak to Darwin, —

“Visions of glory, spare my aching sight!”

But meanwhile the sceptre of zoölogical science departed from Philadelphia forever, and was usurped by New York or Boston, whose naturalists had during all this time been tranquilly engaged in making additions to natural history, and had never been disturbed with this controversy as to who first discovered that worthless kind of Rat. Their motto in science then was, —

“Forget the steps already trod,  
And onward urge thy way.”

This extravaganza merely illustrates the constant danger to progress in literature and science springing from quarrels among their individual professors. Time is lost in these ignoble brawls. Boston itself once came near losing its position as a scientific centre owing to the infuriated controversy among scientific men as to the first discoverer of the properties of sulphuric ether. There was the thing itself, mitigating or annihilating pain; but the pain it at first created among the various claimants and their friends was perhaps greater than the pain it destroyed among the patients to whom it was early applied. Not only were the various claimants ruined, but it was to be feared that scientific discovery in Boston would come to an end. This catastrophe was averted by a pun. A benevolent gentleman announced his intention of

erecting a monument in the Public Garden in honor of the beneficent discovery ; and a wit suggested, in one of the Boston newspapers, that all the claimants should be represented on the sides of the monument, while over them all, in letters of gold, should be written the word "Either." From that moment the Boston scientists composed their animosities, and proceeded to their true work of advancing science, without regard as to who was first or second in inventing or applying an idea.

All this may seem to be digression, but it really is not so. Had William H. Prescott been possessed by the spirit which animated the Philadelphia professor who gloried in his Rat, the nine octavos of Motley would never have been written, and the cause of history would have suffered an immense loss. After Motley had thoroughly matured the plan of his work, he learned, to his surprise, that Prescott had made large preparations for writing the "History of Philip the Second of Spain," though his "History of the Conquest of Peru" had not yet been published. Prescott was then the most popular of American historians ; Motley was known only as the author of two unsuccessful novels, and of some articles in a review : and with a pang which only noble spirits can feel when they give up a cherished design which has entwined itself with their moral and intellectual life, he prepared to abandon the great object of his ambition. "I had not," he said, "first made up my mind to write a history, and then cast about to take up a

subject. My subject had taken me up, drawn me on, and absorbed me into itself. It was necessary for me, it seemed, to write the book I had been thinking much of, even if it were destined to fall dead from the press, and I had no inclination or interest to write any other." At last he called upon Prescott, unfolded to him his plan, indicated the points where the historian of "The Rise of the Dutch Republic" would cross the path of the historian of "Philip the Second," and frankly expressed his willingness to abandon his project rather than interfere with Prescott's intended work. Those who knew and remember Prescott may well conceive how that serene and beautiful intelligence, incapable of envy, and delighting in recognizing merit even though it should eclipse his own, received such a proposition. He first, with great good sense, assured Motley that the two books could not injure each other, as the same topics gained increased interest as viewed by two different minds. Then he warmly encouraged him to carry out his undertaking, and placed at his disposal all the books in his own library bearing upon it. He gave him to understand that history would be enriched by his labors; and that any additions to historical knowledge he might make would be welcomed most cordially by his brother historians. "Had the result of that interview," said Motley, "been different,—had he distinctly stated, or even vaguely hinted, that it would be as well if I should select some other topic, or had he sprinkled me with the cold water of conventional and common-place encouragement, I

should have gone from him with a chill upon my mind, and no doubt have laid down the pen at once; for, as I have already said, it was not that I cared about writing a history, but that I felt an inevitable impulse to write one particular history." And as the top and crown of literary magnanimity it must be recorded that Prescott's first two volumes of the "History of Philip the Second" were published in 1855, while Motley's history of "The Rise of the Dutch Republic" did not appear until 1856. But Prescott, in his preface to the work he was never to complete, calls attention to the forth-coming work of Motley with generous praise, declaring that the revolt of the Netherlands was only an episode of his history, and asking the reader's attention to the more minute account of his brother historian, not a page of whose work had yet seen the light, but which he thus heralded with all the impressiveness that attached to his own honored name. Most intelligent readers in Europe and the United States were eager to receive the volumes of Prescott; very few indeed were the readers who expected anything from the pen of Motley. It seems to me, therefore, that there is something inexpressibly beautiful in this cordial testimony to Motley's possible merits by a man who was in the full assurance of acknowledged celebrity, and who thus nobly anticipated the fame of one who was engaged, like himself, in the hard task of lifting the veil which shrouds the historic past. Among authors it would be difficult to name one who was more pure from all



the besetting sins of men of letters than William H. Prescott. Eulogy which might be considered as offensive when addressed to the living may safely be ventured in noting the rare virtues of the dead. At the time he was cheering Motley on to historical labors which in some respects traversed his own, he had a profound sense, derived from reading passages in "Merry Mount," that he was encouraging a formidable competitor, who might displace him from the position he then occupied as the most prominent and popular of American historians. I have a great respect for Prescott's histories, but Prescott's literary character outvalues a hundredfold all his literary triumphs. There was no possibility that such an exquisitely amiable heart and intelligence should be ever vexed by any controversy as to whether he or Motley had discovered an historic "Rat." Motley so deeply felt the stainless purity of Prescott's character and intellect that he could never speak of his disinterestedness without deep emotion.

The more Motley reflected on the portion of his work already written, the more he was convinced that he could not hope to complete it satisfactorily on this side of the water. In 1851 he accordingly took his family to Europe, and lived for five years the life of a recluse, prowling among the state archives at Berlin, Dresden, the Hague, and Brussels, and finding every year reasons for modifying the most confident opinions he had formed the year before. The history of "The Rise of the Dutch Republic" was thus the result

of ten years' labor, continually changing its form as new materials were placed within the author's reach, and ending at last in the great historical epic, with the first William of Orange for its hero, which we now read with so much instruction and delight. This work, though widely circulated both in Europe and America, has probably never yet been estimated at its full worth. I have recently gone over it, pencil in hand, noting its singular felicities in respect to style, to thought, to picturesque description, to imaginative realization of persons and events, and to positive discoveries of new facts, and I might fill a whole number of the Magazine by merely pointing out these excellences in detail. Dr. Holmes has printed one letter (November, 1853) addressed to him while Motley was in Brussels, showing how completely the latter was living, mentally and morally, day after day, in the sixteenth rather than in the nineteenth century. "I am," says Motley, "in a town which, for aught I know, may be very gay. I don't know a living soul in it. We have not a single acquaintance in the place, and we glory in the fact. . . . *En revanche*, the dead men of the place are my intimate friends. I am at home in any cemetery. With the fellows of the sixteenth century I am on the most familiar terms. Any ghost that ever flits by night across the moonlight square is at once hailed by me as a man and a brother. I call him by his Christian name at once. . . . Whatever may be the result of my labor, nobody can say that I have not worked like a brute beast. But I don't

care for the result; the labor is in itself its own reward, and all I want. I go day after day to the archives here (as I went all summer at the Hague), studying the old letters and documents of the fifteenth [sixteenth] century. Here I remain among my fellow-worms, feeding on these musty mulberry-leaves, out of which we are hereafter to spin our silk. How can you expect anything interesting from such a human cocoon?"

In 1856 he went to London in search of a publisher. Murray declined the huge manuscript, and it was published at the author's expense by John Chapman. Its success was brilliant and immediate. Fifteen thousand copies were sold in England in 1857. Guizot superintended a French translation of it. It was also translated into Dutch, German, and Russian. The pirated editions in English were numerous. The American edition was published by the Harpers, and it is needless to say that it found hosts of readers here. Among others, so eminent a scholar as Dr. Lieber was in a rapture of enthusiasm about the book. "Congress and Parliament," he wrote, "decree thanks for military exploits; rarely for diplomatic achievements. If they ever voted their thanks for books—and what deeds have influenced the course of human events more than some books?—Motley ought to have the thanks of our Congress; but I doubt not he has already the thanks of every American who has read the work. It will leave its distinct mark upon the American mind."

Hardly pausing in his historical labors for rest or recreation, he proceeded at once to gather materials for the continuation of his work. The first two volumes of the "History of the United Netherlands," the fruit of enormous original research, were published in 1860. On the breaking out of our civil war his patriotism was roused to the highest pitch, and for a period he forgot the history of every country but his own.

He was extremely popular as a man in the most influential circles of London society, and he used his popularity to make his patriotism efficient. You could not get him to converse on any other topic than the wrong of the rebellion. He fought our battles in every drawing-room he entered, encountering prejudice with resolution, and shaming ignorance by the torrent of facts and arguments with which he overwhelmed it. His two long letters in the "London Times" going over the whole grounds of the controversy produced a marked effect on the public opinion of England. He was like a man possessed, — a fervid missionary of a political creed on which, as he thought, the salvation of a nation depended. When he returned to the United States in 1861, his old American companions, sufficiently excited themselves, were astonished at the superior zeal and vehemence of his patriotism. Mr. Lincoln appointed him minister to Austria, and on his way to his post he stopped a short time in England to have another tussle with his English opponents. When he arrived at Vienna he wrote, under date of November 16, 1861, to Holmes: "I do what good I



can. I think I made some impression on Lord John Russell, with whom I spent two days after my arrival in England, and I talked very frankly and as strongly as I could to Palmerston, and I have had long conversations and correspondences with other leading men in England. I have also had an hour's conversation with Thouvenal in Paris. I hammered the Northern view into him as soundly as I could. . . . Our fate is in our own hands, and Europe is looking on to see which side is strongest. When it has made the discovery, it will back it as also the best and most moral. . . . Yesterday I had my audience with the Emperor. He received me with much cordiality, and seemed interested in the long account which I gave him of our affairs. You may suppose I inculcated the Northern views. We spoke in his vernacular, and he asked me afterward if I was a German. I mention this not from vanity, but because he asked it with earnestness, as if it had a political significance." This must have been the first time that an American ambassador at the Austrian court was suspected of being a German, owing to the ease and rapidity with which he conversed in the language, and the absolute purity of his pronunciation.

His mind and feelings were so wrought up by the calamities of his country that in the early years of the war he almost abandoned literary work altogether, and it was only when the side he so passionately espoused was plainly nearing success that he resumed it. "I wish," he wrote to Holmes, in 1862, "I could



bore you about something else but American politics. But there is nothing else *worth* thinking of in the world. All else is leather and prunella. We are living over again the days of the Dutchmen, or the seventeenth-century Englishmen." He early took strong ground for the emancipation of the slaves. When he heard of the news of the battle of Gettysburg and the surrender of Vicksburg, his family, with the exception of his youngest child, were absent from the house. How to express his joy he knew not, but express it he must. So he rushed up stairs to the room where the infant was sleeping, and screeched through the key-hole of the door, "Vicksburg is ours!"

There are characteristic touches in these letters from Vienna which are exquisite in the humor with which he flouts all despotic theories. Thus he speaks of the Archduke Maximilian: "He adores bull-fights, and rather regrets the Inquisition, and considers the Duke of Alva everything noble and chivalrous, and the most abused of men. It would do your heart good to hear his invocations to that deeply injured shade, and his denunciations of the ignorant and vulgar Protestants who have defamed him." And again: "We have nothing green here but the Archduke Max, who firmly believes that he is going forth to Mexico to establish an American empire, and that it is his divine mission to destroy the dragon of democracy, and establish the true Church, the Right Divine, and all sorts of games. Poor young man!"

Mr. Sumner was in the habit of telling, with much

humor, one amusing incident in Motley's diplomatic career in Vienna. After the close of the joint war of Prussia and Austria against Denmark on the question of the duchies, Bismarek came to Vienna to settle the terms of peace with the Emperor. He arrived too late to go to the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and remembering that his old university chum, Motley, was the American minister, he drove directly to his house and found Motley just retiring from a modest family dinner, with nothing but the remains of the dessert on the table. The old friends cordially joined hands and hearts; fresh viands were furnished from Motley's kitchen, and fresh Burgundy from his cellar, and for hour after hour the old collegians went over their student experiences and frolics at the University of Berlin, without speaking a word about politics. After cracking his last walnut and swallowing his last glass of wine, Bismarek, long after midnight, left Motley's house, and sauntered away whistling to his hotel, with an immense internal satisfaction at the entertainment he had derived from his first night's experience at Vienna. But the eyes of Europe were all this time on the terrible man of "blood and iron." The foreign embassies were in an uproar. Was it possible that there was to be an alliance between Prussia and the United States? It was known that New York was, in respect to its German population, the third or fourth German city in the world. What meant this mysterious visit to the American minister, — the first visit the dreaded Prussian statesman had made on

entering Vienna? Telegrams flew to London, Paris, Turin, and St. Petersburg. The ingenuity of diplomats was taxed to account for what was unaccountable. Sumner himself, as chairman of the Senate Committee of Foreign Affairs, received private letters from eminent persons abroad earnestly inquiring whether the United States had resolved to depart from non-interference with the affairs of Europe, as recommended by the immortal Washington, etc., — absurd letters, at which Sumner, who knew Motley's early associations with Bismarck, exhibited his teeth in the most genial and humorous of smiles. He laughed with Motley over the occurrence some years afterward, when the affair was explained to him just as he had divined it. It is a pity that this one humorous incident in the whole dreary correspondence of the American Department of State with its ministers abroad is not recorded in any state paper. But it is certain that for a day or two it seriously disturbed the consultations of every cabinet in Europe.

Motley was six years in Vienna, and then resigned, in a fit of indignation growing out of the miserable McCracken affair. Mr. John Bigelow has lately published a defence of Mr. Seward's conduct in this business, the amount of which is that Mr. Seward could not have shielded Motley from President Johnson's jealous, irrational anger without running the risk of being himself dismissed from the State Department, — a catastrophe which he contemplated with horror, as it might, in the President's then irritable and sus-

picious state of mind, lead to some new appointment disastrous to the country. Dr. Holmes considers the defence as little better than an impeachment, and Mr. Bigelow himself does not make the most of his case.

The historian, after his resignation, returned with new zeal to his historical labors, and in 1868 published the last two volumes of his "History of the United Netherlands." Their reception showed how different was the estimate formed of Motley's mind and character, by the great public of Europe and the United States, from the estimate of him formed by Mr. Andrew Johnson and Mr. Andrew Johnson's special ambassador (truly) extraordinary abroad, Mr. George W. M'Cracken. In the summer of 1868 he returned with his family to Boston, and was warmly greeted by all his old friends. He appeared to be in the full vigor of bodily and mental health, and his powers of conversation were such as surprised the most redoubtable talkers of that city. Dr. Holmes mentions his connection with the Saturday Club of Boston,—an association composed of some fifteen or twenty persons, who were elected to membership on the ground that they were generally opposed to each other in mind, character, and pursuits, and that therefore conversation at the monthly dinner of the club would naturally assume quite an animated if not controversial tone. Motley delighted in this association, as it gave full play for the friendly collision of his own intellect with the intellects of others,—intel-



lects of which some were as keen, bright, and rapid as his own. "Always remember me," he wrote from Vienna, "to the club, one and all. It touches me nearly when you assure me that I am not forgotten by them. To-morrow is Saturday, the last of the month [the time of the meeting of the club]. We are going to dine with our Spanish colleague. But the first bumper of the Don's champagne I shall drain to the health of my Parker House friends." On his return to Boston in 1868 he was, of course, warmly welcomed by the fraternity, whose monthly dinners he constantly attended. Perhaps, as Dr. Holmes has described the club generally in a note to his biography, it may not be an indecorum to lift the veil from one of its dinners in which he bore a main part in the conversational achievements. Motley laid down some proposition, which Holmes, of course, instantly doubted, and then Lowell plunged in, differing both from Motley and Holmes. A triangular duel ensued, with an occasional ringing sentence thrown in by Judge Hoar for the benevolent purpose of increasing a complication already sufficient to task the wit and resource of the combatants. In ordinary discussion one person is allowed to talk at least for a half or a quarter of a minute before his brother athletes rush in upon him with their replies; but in this debate all three talked at once, with a velocity of tongue which fully matched their velocity of thought. Still, in the incessant din of voices, every point made by one was replied to by another or ridiculed by a



third, and was instantly followed by new statements and counter-statements, arguments and counter-arguments, hits and retorts, all germane to the matter, and all directed to a definite end. The curiosity of the contest was that neither of the combatants repeated anything which had been once thrown out of the controversy as irrelevant, and that while speaking all together the course of the discussion was as clear to the mind as though there had been a minute's pause between statement and reply. The discussion was finished in fifteen minutes; if conducted under the ordinary rules of conversation, it would have lasted a couple of hours, without adding a new thought, or fact, or stroke of wit applicable to the question in debate. The other members of the club looked on in mute wonder while witnessing these feats of intellectual and vocal gymnastics. If any other man than Judge Hoar had ventured in, his voice and thought would both have been half a minute behind the point which the discussion had reached, and would therefore have been of no account in the arguments which contributed to bring it to a close. On this occasion I had no astronomical clock to consult; but, judging by the ear, I came to the conclusion that in swiftness of utterance Motley was two-sixteenths of a second ahead of Holmes, and nine-sixteenths of a second ahead of Lowell.

In the autumn of 1868 Motley warmly supported Grant for the Presidency. For the victorious general he had then a genuine admiration. Shortly after

Grant was sworn in he was appointed minister to England, and unanimously confirmed by the Senate. He accepted the post with some misgivings; but still, when he sailed from the country he had no reason to suppose that he left a single enemy behind him.

The wretched story of his recall is told by Dr. Holmes with admirable temper, but yet with an incisive vigor of style and thought which demolishes every pretence by which the real reason for his dismissal has been attempted to be disguised.

It would be a curious subject of inquiry whether or not Grant ever read "The Rise of the Dutch Republic." There are so many points of similarity between his best and noblest qualities and those of William the Silent that, if he had read the book, one would think that Motley's vivid presentation of the Dutch hero would have endeared the author to him. Indeed, Motley was so confident of the support of Grant that when vague rumors of his intended removal reached him he spoke of them slightly. "Of one thing I am sure," he said, "and that is the friendship of the President."

There can be little doubt that Motley's sensitive nature was stung to the quick by the act of his government. President Johnson treated him with sheer brutality, and though he was justly irritated, he did not feel himself dishonored; but what cut him to the heart in the conduct of President Grant was the attempt to show that his dismissal from office was due to his disobedience of the instructions of his

government; thus placing him, as he supposed, before the eyes of Europe and America as a disgraced minister. The wrong wrung his very soul, and he could never forgive, and, what was worse, he never could forget it. Still, he resumed his historical studies, and in 1874 published "The Life and Death of John of Barneveld," a continuation of "The History of the United Netherlands," and bringing his Dutch annals down to the beginning of the Thirty Years' War. Valuable and interesting as the work is, it may be said that if he had shortened Barneveld's life by a half, he might have lengthened his own; for the materials were more intractable than any he had before encountered, — the handwriting especially of the great Advocate of Holland being so bad as almost to be undecipherable even by the aid of the microscope.

On the last day of the year in which this noble work appeared, Mrs. Motley died. This blow, coming as it did in the midst of bodily illness and mental distress, broke his heart. He visited the United States for the last time in the summer of 1875; returned to England in the autumn; and after struggling manfully for more than two years with the illness which prevented him from engaging in any strenuous mental exertion, he died peacefully on the 29th of May, 1877, the last words on his lips being, "It has come! it has come!" He was buried by the side of his wife in Kensal Green Cemetery. On his gravestone the simple dates of his birth and death

are given, followed by a text chosen by himself: "In God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

In judging Mr. Motley as an historian we must first refer to the importance of the great European epoch to which his histories are devoted. He seized, with the divining glance of genius, on that exact point in European history where Man, if we may so express it, first came into resolute hostility to Privileged Men. The reader who fails to perceive this fundamental fact will follow the course of his thoughtful, picturesque, and glowing narratives without catching his main purpose. The government of the United States — the inheritor of the ideas of Human Rights, the struggles of whose champions with monarchs and nobles, through tumults, battles, sieges, proscriptions, and massacres, he spent his life in depicting — twice appointed him to represent itself in Europe, and twice subjected him to insults which no honorable gentleman could bear without remonstrance and indignation. His enemies and defamers will gain no additional reputation by having their names associated with his; but the historian whom they attempted to dishonor will be held in grateful remembrance by the American people, as the man who first explored the obscure sources and vitalized the representation of the ideas, the events, and the martyrdoms whose final result was the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

His work, as he originally conceived it, was to have the general title of "The Eighty Years' War for



Liberty," comprehending the three volumes of "The Rise of the Dutch Republic," the four volumes of "The History of the United Netherlands," the two volumes of "The Life and Death of John of Barneveld," and "The History of the Thirty Years' War," ending with "The Peace of Westphalia," in 1648. The last-mentioned history, which would have been the crowning event of his literary career, he did not live long enough even to begin, though he must have accumulated large materials for it. The portions of his grand plan which he did complete are among the most valuable contributions to history which the present century, singularly rich in historical literature, has produced; for his nine octavos are based on sources of information still remaining in manuscript, and which, in many cases, he was the first to discover and investigate. In this task of original research he worked, in his own emphatic language, like "a brute beast." The novelty and importance of many of the facts he thus rescued from oblivion gained for him the respect and esteem of every historical scholar in Europe; for there was hardly a European nation on whose history his researches did not shed light. "For the history of the United Provinces," as he himself said, "is not at all a provincial history. It is the history of European liberty. Without the struggle of Holland and England against Spain, all Europe might have been Catholic and Spanish. It was Holland that saved England in the sixteenth century, and, by so doing, secured the



triumph of the Reformation, and placed the independence of the various states of Europe upon a sure foundation." Indeed, his books illustrate the contemporary annals of England, France, and Germany almost as much as they do those of Holland and Belgium. Especially is this the case with the England of Elizabeth and the Great Britain of James the First. He delved in the English State-paper Office and among the MSS. of the British Museum until he unearthed new facts which gave a shock of pleased surprise to many of the most diligent English antiquaries and historical students. Speaking of the liberality of modern European governments in opening their archives to the inspection of the historian, he describes the advantages the latter now enjoys in words which literally embody his own experience. "He leans over the shoulder of Philip the Second at his writing-table, as the King spells patiently out, with cipher key in hand, the most concealed hieroglyphics of Parma or Guise or Mendoza. . . . He enters the cabinet of the deeply pondering Burghley, and takes from the most private drawer the memoranda which record that minister's unutterable doubtings; he pulls from the dressing-gown folds of the stealthy, soft-gliding Walsingham the last secret which he has picked from the Emperor's pigeon-holes or the Pope's pocket, and which not Hatton, nor Buckhurst, nor Leicester, nor the Lord Treasurer is to see, — nobody but Elizabeth herself; he sits invisible at the most secret councils of the Nassaus and Barnevelds and

Buys, or pores with Farnese over coming victories and vast schemes of universal conquest; he reads the latest bit of scandal, the minutest characteristic of king or minister, chronicled by the gossiping Venetians for the edification of the Forty; and after all this prying and eavesdropping, having seen the cross-purposes, the bribings, the windings in the dark, he is not surprised if those who were systematically deceived did not always arrive at correct conclusions." Motley thus "interviews," as it were, all the sovereigns, statesmen, generals, and churchmen of the sixteenth century, so that through him we know them as we know, or rather, perhaps, as we do *not* know, the leading personages of our own time.

After having thus amassed and digested his materials, the task of composition seems to have been to Motley a positive pleasure. He could write from an early hour in the morning to late in the afternoon of an English day with unabated vigor and delight, receiving no other inspiration than what he derived from his subject-matter. His daughter mentions that for years before his death he did not indulge even in the student's luxury of smoking. He once laughingly said to me that what cured him of the habit was the circumstance that when he went to Europe he could get no good cigars. The charm of his narrative style comes from his unwithholding self-abandonment to the scenes, events, and persons that filled his mind to overflowing.

When a New England farmer was asked to buy a

machine which hatched eggs into chickens without the interposition of the hen, he naturally objected that the thing could not be done better by the machine than by the hen; "and then, you know," he added, "hens' time is worth nothing." In every estimate of an historian's penetrative and persistent research into the obscure recesses of history, his time, like the time of the hen brooding over her eggs, is popularly reckoned as worth nothing. Certainly no great history has ever been written, with the exception, perhaps, of Macaulay's, which at all remunerated the historian for the *time* he expended on his work. But Motley, like the other great historians of his period, despised lucre as compared with fame, and was willing to consider his time as worth nothing, provided he could *add* anything to historical knowledge. After his "brute work" was done—a work, however, which required great intellectual discrimination in the separation of the wheat of history from its chaff—he sat down to write his narrative in a perfect glow of moral and mental enthusiasm. Hence his style is not only spirited and impetuous, but joyous. Even its defects testify to the elation of heart and brain out of which it spontaneously sprang. Its fascination to the reader is due to its freshness, vivacity, vigor, brilliancy, and the spirit of enjoyment manifest in every page. Its faults may be said to come from the excess of its virtues. What is called the "dignity of history" is frequently violated, but this violation is found to be the result of a more than

common effort to reach the reality of history. Motley had come so intimately near to the interior life of the externally august personages who imposed upon Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that he found it impossible to pay any proper regard to the grandeur of their station and the splendor of their habiliments. He unfrocks and unclothes priest and king alike, and exhibits both in the nudity of their essential feebleness or wickedness. He leaves not "a rag of righteousness" on the form of any tyrant or bigot whom he selects for exposure, relentlessly stripping him of every pretension of self-delusion and self-justification by which his crimes have been heretofore palliated. He is among the first of those modern historians who have had the courage to declare that the old tolerant plea of "sincerity" in religious belief is no excuse for crimes which are committed by the bigots of that belief. Inhuman depravity is not vindicated by tracing it to mistaken views of religious obligation. The inhumanity must condemn either the man or his belief.

Motley's power of characterization is specially exhibited in his portraiture of Philip the Second of Spain. He has followed, with the pitilessness of justice, the whole course of the life of that champion of "the true religion." Every low amour in which he indulged is as well known to him as to the transitory harlot who for the moment attracted the Most Catholic King's appetites. There is something almost vindictive in the patience by which he proves the



Most Catholic King's violation of all those precepts of Christianity which are intended to restrain sensual lusts. That Philip ever felt toward any woman that passion which poets and decent men call love, is demonstrated by Motley to have been an impossibility. Ascending from vices of the senses to vices of the soul, the relentless historian shows him to have been devoid of friendship even for such agents of his will as Alva and Farnese; that there was no good in him, and that of all the base and cruel men of his time, he was the basest and most cruel, — worse even than the instruments he employed to destroy political and spiritual freedom by means of conquest and massacre. Motley sustains this opinion by citations from Philip's private letters, and there is hardly a dark line in the portrait which is not confirmed by Philip's own hand. The crowned monster hated the whole human race, and from his birth to his horrible death in torments unutterable, the historian paints him with a minuteness of touch which it is almost frightful to contemplate. Suetonius has black passages enough in his sketches of the Cæsars, but the cumulative effect of Motley's repeated proofs of the inhumanity of the second Philip exceeds in horror many of the most horrible pictures of depravity in the pages of the Roman historian.

It is curious that it did not occur to Motley while delineating such a character, who was, after all, next to the Pope, the head of Christendom, that Christianity itself was a religion unsuited to the fierce



populations of Europe. There is a terrible phrase of the Christian Church, meant to embody all its holy wrath against a possible foe of its precepts and tenets. That phrase is "Antichrist." Now in the sixteenth century, according to the principles of Christianity as embodied in its authentic documents, "Antichrist" was perfectly embodied in the person of the Most Catholic King. Christianity is essentially humane; Philip was essentially inhuman. There is not a precept of Christ which Philip did not violate on system. How much more sincere would it have been for him to have revived the graceful heathenism of Greece and Rome, and connected it as a point of faith with the sanguinary practices of the early Druids, than to have disgraced Christianity by making it responsible for acts which every good-natured worshipper of Jupiter and Venus would have recoiled from with horror, and which no Druid priest familiar with bloody sacrifices could have been tempted by all Philip's mines of gold and silver in the new America to indorse! In reading the history of modern Europe one is constantly wondering why a paganism more brutal than that which obtained in Greece and Rome—a paganism which Socrates and Cicero would have protested against with all the eloquence of instinctive reason, morality, and humanity—should have dared to call itself the religion of Christ. Perhaps if the course of Christianity had been directed to the East rather than to the West, it would have found in the Buddhists of Asia more consistent disciples than it has ever found

in the "civilized" communities of Europe, where, history tells us, it has been so often barbarously and grotesquely caricatured. Philip's God was a combination of Belial and Moloch,—a God representing a magnified image of his own character. Atheism as to such a deity is the first condition of Christian faith. And yet he shot, hanged, racked, burned, or buried alive all men, women, and children who refused to worship *his* God,—that is, the apotheosis of Philip!

Philip the Second is Motley's favorite horror in his historic characterization, as much as James the Second is Macaulay's. Both portraits are elaborated in a similar relentless fashion, epigram coming constantly in to add new zest to invective. Indeed, it may be said that Motley hated Philip even more than he hated Mr. Ex-Secretary Fish, and Mr. Ex-Under-Secretary Bancroft Davis. But his masterpiece in characterization is, on the whole, the "Béarnese,"—Henry of Navarre, Henry the Fourth of France. Neither in English nor French literature is to be found such a complete representation of this man in all the variety of his talents and accomplishments, of his virtues and his vices, as Motley has given; and Motley does this not merely by analyzing his character, but by showing him to us as he was in council and in action. Whenever in "The History of the United Netherlands," or "The Life and Death of John of Barneveld," Henry comes upon the scene, the reader welcomes him as an auditor in a theatre welcomes a great actor, comic or tragic; for he knows

that there is in store for him a short period of intense and unmitigated enjoyment. The strange levity of Henry the Fourth in all matters of religion, his tricks, his lies, his libertinism, his unscrupulousness, his determination to be an absolute king, are all vividly brought out in connection with his splendid talents, his position as the Catholic head and defender of the Protestant interest in Europe, his cordial detestation of Spanish and Austrian schemes to dominate the mind as well as the territory of the Continent, and the magnificent—almost the mad—courage with which he plunged into the thick of a battle, with the proud command to his nobles and men-at-arms, "Follow my plume!" Motley seizes the distinctive characteristics of this gay, buoyant, versatile, and *unmoral* spirit, and preserves the unity of the character amid all the wide varieties of its manifestation. The contrast between Henry, whose life seemed passed in the open air, and his rival, the gloomy, mediocre, cowardly, and dyspeptic letter-writer secluded in the Escorial, who sent his bloody mandates over Europe, but had never shown any gallantry in the field, is exhibited by Motley in its most piquant aspects. It may be added that it is curious that a scholar like Motley, in his incessant attempts to load Philip with ever new burdens of ridicule and dishonor, should not have recalled to his memory that deliciously witty scene, in "The Birds" of Aristophanes, where Prometheus is represented as coming down from the skies to blab the secrets of the gods with an

umbrella over his head to prevent Jove from seeing him. As if the astute Henry of Navarre, the cleverest rogue in Christendom,—in fact with a touch of the “Jupiter-Scapin” in him,—could not detect the person and movements of Philip under his seemingly impenetrable umbrella!

But these two men, prominent as they are, convey but a limited notion of the richness and variety of Motley's gallery of historical characters. In “The Rise of the Dutch Republic” we have as the central figure the first William of Orange. Then come the Counts Egmont and Horn; Cardinal Granvelle and the Duchess Margaret of Parma; Ruy Gomez da Silva, Alva, Requesens, and Don John of Austria; Louis of Nassau and Saint Aldegonde; the Duke of Anjou, Charles the Ninth, and Henry the Third of France. These are but a few among many marked characters. Then in “The History of the United Netherlands” we have Elizabeth and James the First; Leicester, Burghley, Walsingham, Buckhurst, Howard of Effingham, Sir Francis Vere, Sir John Norris, Sir Francis Drake, Sir John Hawkins, Sir Philip Sidney, the Earl of Essex, the Earl of Salisbury; the three great generals of the age,—Prince Maurice of Nassau, Alexander of Parma, and Spinola; Guise, Mayenne, Coligny, Sully, Duplessis-Mornay, Henry the Fourth; the Cardinal-Archduke Albert, the Duke of Lerma, Mendoza, Medina-Sidonia, Fuentes, and Philip the Third of Spain; the Popes Paul the Fourth, Paul the Fifth, and Sixtus the Fifth; Hohenlo, Heemskerk, Barneveld, and



scores of others. In "The Life and Death of John of Barneveld" some of these are still active during the twelve years' truce of Holland with Spain, and we have in addition masterly portraits of Jacob Arminius and Hugo Grotius as theologians; of Prince Maurice as a statesman; of Francis Aerssens, the most accomplished of diplomatists; and above and beyond all, of Barneveld himself. The most piquant revelations of the pedantry of James the First of Great Britain, and of the libertinism and the grand speculative views on European politics of Henry the Fourth of France, are contained in these last volumes from Motley's pen.

In description our American historian is generally considered to hold a prominent place among the most picturesque historians of the century. Take Prescott at his best, as in the account of the great naval battle of Lepanto, and it is difficult to find his match in simple force and clearness of representation, for the facts are placed before us through the medium of words, and yet the picture formed in the imagination of the reader seems to be independent of the words by which it is conveyed. Motley's account of the same battle is notoriously inferior, and, indeed, exhibits him at his worst. He should be judged by his vivid picturing of those events in which he not only makes his reader the witness of a ceremony, siege, conflict, or martyrdom, but so enlists his sympathies that he is as it were mentally forced to become a participator in it. This immediate consciousness, this realizing sense of an incident which, though it occurred three centuries



ago, affects the reader as if it had passed yesterday before his very eyes, is the impression which Motley's best descriptions and narrations make on our feelings and imaginations. Among these may be instanced the account of the executions of Egmont and Horn; the doings of the Holy Inquisition in the Low Countries; the conduct of the heretics when they were doomed to be beheaded, racked, burned, or buried alive; the "Reign of Terror and Council of Blood" inaugurated by Alva; the sack of Zutphen; the siege of Haarlem; the siege of Leyden; the sack of Antwerp by the Spanish mutineers; the siege of Maestricht; the "French fury" at Antwerp; the assassination of William of Orange; the siege of Antwerp; the defeat of the Spanish Armada; the siege and battle of Nieuport; the siege of Ostend; the passion of Henry the Fourth for Margaret de Montmorency; the assassination of Henry; the escape of Grotius; and the trial and execution of Barneveld. To say that in respect to mere interest these excel any fictitious scenes in ordinary novels is to do but scant justice to the power displayed in their description. They absolutely absorb and inthrall the attention of the reader.

It is necessary to pause here, not for want of matter, but for want of space. Yet it would be unjust to Motley not to emphasize that element of attractiveness in his histories which is derived from his personal character. Those who knew him intimately read his works with the same delight that they listened to his conversation, when some great question of justice

or freedom which had touched his heart stimulated all the faculties and evoked all the acquirements of his fertile and richly stored intellect, and when he poured forth his eloquence in a torrent of speech every word of which was alive with a generous ardor for truth and right, and a noble disdain for everything false, mean, base, and cruel. As the historian of liberty in its early struggles with political and ecclesiastical despotism, every quality of his large and opulent nature found frank expression in his books. The reader of his works is therefore not only enriched by the new facts and striking thoughts he communicates, but by the direct communication of the author's soul to his own. That soul was the soul of a singularly noble, sincere, honorable, and intrepid gentleman, who felt the mere imputation of a stain as a wound; and to the young men of the country intimacy with such a spirit through his writings cannot but exert a healthy stimulus on all that is best both in their exertions and their aspirations.

## RECOLLECTIONS OF CHARLES SUMNER.

THE first two volumes of Mr. E. L. Pierce's excellent biography of Charles Sumner are confined to what may be called the period of his preparation for political life. They end at the time when his influence as a force in national affairs really began. The abundant materials which Mr. Pierce has in his possession assure us that his forth-coming volumes will far exceed in interest and value those which he has already published. Meanwhile, all recollections of Sumner, recorded by friends who surveyed him from various points of view, cannot but aid him in making his biography complete. The charm of Mr. Pierce's work, so far as it is published, is the absence in it of partisanship. Warm as is his sympathy with his subject, he is not specially affected by that disease of admiration, that *lues Boswelliana*, that *furor biographicus*, which Macaulay declares "is to writers of lives what the goitre is to an Alpine shepherd, or dirt-eating to a negro slave." Indeed, he generally lets Sumner tell his own story, without any of those exclamation-points of admiring wonder which generally prove that the biographer is the slave rather than the social and intellectual equal of the man whose life he depicts.

It was the misfortune of Sumner that, more than any other public man of his time, he was subjected to the extremes of adulation and obloquy. His real character can hardly be discerned amid the tumult of puffs and scoffs, of exaltations and execrations, which the mere mention of his name excited during his public career. Sumner himself was inclined to take the compliments at more than their real worth, while he experienced another though different satisfaction in reading the calumnies. The compliments he considered as indications that all lovers of liberty and justice were on his side; the calumnies delighted him, because, as they grew fiercer and fiercer, they seemed to prove that his blows directed at slavery and injustice were telling more and more against the enemies of freedom and right. It is difficult to say whether his enjoyment was more intense in exhibiting to his friends the private letters from distinguished men, abroad and at home, which exalted him to the skies, or in spreading before them other letters, mostly anonymous, which damned him to everlasting infamy as the foe of his country and of the human race. It must be confessed that, during the rebellion, our Southern friends did not confine themselves within the limits of good taste in their private communications to their Northern opponents. It is impossible for me to compute the number of times that Sumner's soul was consigned to perdition, with all the additions of superfluous profanity known to gentlemen in whom profanity appears to be a secretion in the throat. These private threats and

public denunciations were a source of humorous pleasure to Sumner. He never swore as an individual; nobody ever heard an oath slip from his lips even in his ecstasies of philanthropic rage; but he was the best swearer by proxy and quotation that I ever listened to. The oaths launched at him by his Southern enemies, the oaths which some Republican Senators would occasionally hurl at him when they were vexed by his obstinacy in clinging to his own view of a party question that had been decided against him by a majority of Republican statesmen, — these, in narrating his experiences in political life to a friend, he would roll over on his tongue in quite an unsanctified but still innocent fashion, and laugh at the profanity as something exquisitely comical. The more people swore at him, the more delighted he was; and it is a pity that he did not have the same sense of humor in estimating the hyperboles of panegyric addressed to him by his admirers, which he unquestionably had in estimating the hyperboles of execration shot at him by his assailants.

My acquaintance with Sumner preceded by a few years his celebrated oration on "The True Grandeur of Nations," delivered in Boston on the Fourth of July, 1845. He had recently come back from Europe, after one of the most successful social campaigns which a young American had ever made abroad. From the first I was attracted by his grand, cordial way of receiving even a chance acquaintance; and I soon came to love him very much, as did scores of other young



men, who dropped occasionally into his law office for an hour's conversation. We all had a special liking for some English, or French, or German author; and here was a man who had seen and conversed with our particular idol a year or two ago, who was still in familiar correspondence with him, and was willing to show us, in confidence, a letter from him dated only a month before. Sumner thus consumed in private conversation with us and other more learned loungers a vast amount of time which probably should have been devoted to establishing himself in his profession. Whether he would have ever become a great advocate or a great judge, had he devoted his whole energies and his constantly accumulating stores of legal learning to the profession of the law, it is difficult to say. My impression of him, in 1843, was this, — that he was a man who would devote himself to assisting and cheering on others to eminence rather than strive to become eminent himself. He was even then a philanthropist, a lover of mankind, to the very core of his nature. In conversing with him I found that all his study of history had impressed him with a horror of war, that all his study of law had kindled his soul into an ambition to make jurisprudence identical with ethics, and that his mind was specially bent on schemes which proposed such an extension of the law of nations that all conflicts of nations with each other should be decided hereafter by tribunals on principles of reason and justice, and that the sword should be appealed to only after every moral restraint on the passions of men had

been urged in vain. He not only quoted in illustration of his conception all great writers on international law, but he was particularly interesting in citing the unpublished opinions of eminent living European jurists with whom he had conversed on the subject, and who confided to him aspirations in the direction of his own ideal of a Congress of Nations, which they probably would not have risked their reputations as practical men by putting into print. This ambition to extend the scope of international law was never absent from his mind; and later in life, when he made his celebrated speech on "Constructive Claims," all who knew him intimately must have felt that he was aiming at an addition to the laws of nations, that he was innovating on the established code while he was seemingly only expounding it. On the occasion of his last visit to Great Britain, after the Treaty of Washington had been concluded, I laughingly asked him, as we shook hands on the wharf, if he were going to England to collect his "constructive claims." He laughed in return; but he added: "I can tell you one fact you do not know. Lord —— said to me, a few weeks ago, 'Mr. Sumner, had you not made that speech, we should not be here to negotiate the treaty which has just been happily concluded.' So, you see, in making that speech, which has resulted in arbitration, I knew what I was about. The arbitration in this case may not be very satisfactory; indeed, I voted for the treaty only under great stress from friends whose arguments did not altogether convince my judgment;

but the establishment of the principle of arbitration must still be considered a great advance on the old ways of diplomatic intercourse between nations. And you will find that Great Britain will never, in any future war, place herself again in the predicament in which my speech demonstrates she was placed in the matter of the rebel cruisers."

But my object at present is to show what a delight it was to hear Sumner tell anecdotes of his experience of English life after he had returned from his first joyous visit to England, and when he was still a young man, full of enthusiasm for literature as well as for jurisprudence, and thoroughly enjoying, in endless talk with chance visitors, the leisure of a lawyer without clients, before the lawyer had been tempted to appear publicly in the field of either philanthropic enterprise or political discussion. Laying his head far back on his chair, and indolently stretching his long legs to the full length of their possible extension, he would discourse for hours on every subject and every personage which the questions of his visitors aroused in his singularly tenacious memory. "Did you meet Talfourd, Mr. Sumner, while you were in England?" "Oh, yes; and that reminds me of a ludicrous incident connected with Dr. Channing's sending him his lecture on temperance. Channing, you know, was captivated, as all of us were, by Talfourd's exquisite tragedy of 'Ion.' Well, he sent his pamphlet to Talfourd, with the full assurance that the author of such a dramatic poem would gladly receive a lecture

so full of moral truths ; but the good doctor forgot to prepay the postage. In the condition of the postage laws at that time the sum demanded for it was very large, and Talfourd refused to take it from the office. Meanwhile it was exhibited among the letters and documents uncalled for ; and at last the envelope became so torn that the subject, as well as the name of the person to whom it was addressed, became visible to the public eye. Talfourd was unmercifully quizzed by the members of his special club on his unwillingness to take out from the office such a precious document, especially as its subject indicated that it had some particular reference to him. I happened to be at the club one night, or rather morning, when Talfourd came in from the House of Commons, which had just adjourned. After calling for broiled bones and claret, he beckoned me to his table, and asked some questions regarding this Dr. Channing. Of course I told him what a noble philanthropist Channing was, and how greatly he was esteemed by the best men in the United States. ‘ Well, Sumner,’ was his reply, ‘ I wish, if you see him on your return, you would beg him to send me no more of his pamphlets without paying the postage ; and you may add, though it may be at the expense of my character for sobriety, which is unimpeached, that I belong, like my friend Charles Lamb, to the tipsy school.’ ”

And then, perhaps, the querist might be one who had heard of the breakfasts where men of letters met each other at the table of Samuel Rogers. “ Have

you ever, Mr. Sumner, been present at one of these?" "Many times," was the reply; "but you must not be deluded with the idea that the feeling among the persons invited to them was always cordial and friendly. I remember, on one occasion, after we had sat down at the table, Rogers remarked that a prominent lawyer and writer whom he named, though invited, had not yet appeared. Then came a series of bitter sarcasms directed at the absent but expected guest, to which the host blandly contributed his full share. Suddenly the object of this combined attack entered the room, when Rogers rose, shook hands with him in his most charming way, and added, 'Ah! my dear ——, how glad we are to see you! We were just speaking of you as you came in!'" Sumner, indeed, keenly perceived the organized hypocrisy which constitutes the formal politeness at great London dinner and breakfast parties, and knew how much conceit, envy, hatred, and malice may be expressed without any violation of "good manners."

Again, some visitor might ask, "Did you ever meet Macaulay?" And Sumner would answer: "That reminds me of a curious circumstance in my London experience. At a dinner at Lord Lansdowne's the question of codification came up for discussion, and I was appealed to as an American to give what information I could as to how far the laws of the separate States and the United States had been harmonized into a code. I answered in general terms. A gentleman who sat opposite to me at the table, and who had



not spoken before, then began to put to me a series of questions. They were so searching, and were so evidently intended to get at the very root of the matter, that I was driven from point to point, knowing all the time that I must in the end come to the exact, the real advance that our country had made in this direction. This terrible fellow was content with no generalities. His penetrating analysis went pitilessly on, every new question presenting new difficulties for me to clear up; but while I was drawing on all my resources of information to answer him, I felt confident in my own mind that the questioner was Macaulay, though I was then ignorant of the fact that he had returned from India. And I was right; it *was* Macaulay. He was fresh from his great work on the India penal code, and knew more about codification than any English lawyer at the table. And, by the way, perhaps you have heard of the sarcasms that his legal opponents launched against that code. I was told in legal circles that though it had cost the government a guinea a word, it was utterly impracticable." And it may be added here that Macaulay's code, with some modifications, has only been recently adopted by the Indian government. It had to undergo a storm of opposition lasting forty years before its merits were recognized.

The defect of Sumner as a relater of such memories as these was his disposition to be too minute and circumstantial in his narrative. His imaginative memory was roused when he was asked any question as to

his intercourse with an eminent man, and he recalled in a dreamy way the irrelevant as well as the relevant incidents which were connected with it. Thus he would consume ten minutes in telling a story which a man like Choate would have flashed upon his hearer in one.

During all the early period to which I refer, Sumner appeared to be a thorough philanthropist in thought and feeling, rather than a man capable of putting philanthropy into aggressive action, and of becoming a great public force. In listening to him one got the impression of a certain indolence of nature, which would be content with uttering moral opinions without backing them up with moral might. Suddenly, as by a flash of lightning, the forces which had been silently gathering in his soul during long studies, long meditations, and long conversations on moral ideas, broke out in a Fourth-of-July oration. His subject was "The True Grandeur of Nations;" the occasion was the commemoration of Independence-day, which the municipality of Boston celebrates annually with an oration and other fire-works. The great success of Sumner was due to the fact that his oration was studiously framed so as to be utterly *inappropriate* to the occasion. It happened that a considerable number of army and navy officers were present, some of them suggesting to the audience memories of the war of 1812. Foreseeing that there was to be a kind of benevolent mischief in Sumner's oration, I took a position at the extreme end of the hall in which it was

delivered, in order to watch its effect on the countenances of the bewildered or belligerent auditors as his famous plea for peace was developed, each proposition illustrated by some vivid picture of the horrors of war, and both propositions and pictures relentlessly leading to the conclusion that among communities of reasonable and Christian men war should be abolished. The contrast between the expenses of supporting Harvard College and the man-of-war "Ohio," then floating in Boston harbor, together with his somewhat clumsy ridicule of the spangled costume by which an officer of the militia is distinguished by his dress from an ordinary citizen, must have been resented as an inexpiable offence not only by the captains and commodores of the regular army and navy who were present in full regimentals, but by the militia officers whose companies escorted the procession to the hall, and who altogether outshone their professional brethren in the freshness and brilliancy of their military accoutrements. The whole scene, as I viewed it from the outside, seemed to me so deliciously humorous that I fear the moral grandeur of Sumner's sentiments did not impress me half as much as his almost child-like innocence while he went on dealing stab after stab to estimable servants of the United States, who had come there with the reasonable expectation that on the Fourth of July, at least, they would not only be honorably mentioned, but might also count on being overwhelmed by a multitude of those hollow compliments which on such occasions are ordinarily lavished on "the brave defenders

of the country, whether on land or sea." They could not have dreamed that the uselessness of their profession would be the orator's theme, when they remembered how scanty were their emoluments, and how severe was the code of professional honor which prevented them from resorting to those ignoble contrivances by which many civil officers of the government increased their meagre "wage" by illicit and unlawful gains. Sumner, as might naturally have been expected, was called to account by many speakers in the dinner that followed in Faneuil Hall; but he bore his punishment meekly; and the peculiar fascination of his smile was never more charmingly apparent than during the time he sweetly listened to the diatribes of his angry opponents, even when his friend Dr. Palfrey felt himself compelled to join in the chorus of dissent.

On the next day his law office was beset by friends and foes alike. The remonstrants were there in great force; and Sumner had to reply off-hand to those who agreed with him in full, to those who half agreed with him, and to those who totally disagreed with him. For hours he was mobbed by a successive crowd of intelligent men, whose questions were so searching that a speech longer than his oration would have been required to answer them; and sympathizers were almost as difficult for Sumner to manage as non-sympathizers. Hillard, whose office was connected with Sumner's,—divided only by a door,—and who was then in close friendship with him,

quietly remarked to me, amidst the din of voices : "What folly is all this ! Each of these men professes to be a Christian ; Sumner, as I understand it, has simply applied the principles of Christianity to war, and he has raised a tumult fiercer than if he had insulted Boston, on the national anniversary, by an open profession of paganism."

In a few months after this oration on the Fourth of July, 1845, it became evident that Sumner had established himself as a power among two classes of our New England population which it is never safe for any politician or statesman to disregard or despise ; namely, earnest, progressive clergymen, and warm-hearted, cultivated women. In speaking of "cultivated" women, it is of course implied that the phrase includes not only those women of large hearts who have been highly educated as to the knowledge of many languages and many literatures, but those women who have been trained in the austere discipline of practical life to regard moral obligations as the most important and permanent of all the ties on which civil society rests, though they may speak no language but their own, and have read but few books except the Bible and "Pilgrim's Progress." The influence which Sumner early obtained among these sources of real power went on increasing to the day of his death. There was from the first something feminine, though not effeminate, in the delicacy of his perception of moral obligations.

Meanwhile a considerable portion of intelligent,



practical men honestly delivered their opinion that Sumner was, in the most expressive term of Yankee contempt, "a greenhorn." They saw clearly that war was a hateful condition of human affairs to which all "Christian" states must be at times exposed; that preparations for possible wars should properly enter into the economy of all strong governments; that the precepts of the Christian religion were historically proved to be weak against human avarice and human ambition; and that the best way, on the whole, to prevent war was to be prepared for it. These men did not add that the great provocations to war were moral, springing from the stalwart assertion of the rights of man against the oppressions of privileged men; that there could be no peace as long as any man was deprived of his rights; and that the fiery philanthropists who appear as the champions of reason, justice, and peace, who denounce religious superstition and political tyranny in words which stir multitudes into revolt against what is truly revolting, are the most efficient provokers of war. When they ask this king or that aristocracy to combine with other kings and other aristocracies to prevent the nations they rule from indulging in the expensive expedient of war, they suppose a condition of things which would reduce the people they rule into a weak submission to servitude, against which human nature, at least in Europe and the United States, instinctively uprises with arms in its hands. Fifteen or sixteen years after the oration which first made him prominent among the public

men of the country, Sumner's earnest preaching of the seemingly peaceful doctrine of right and justice ended in making him one of the most prominent of those American statesmen who, in the most frightful of civil wars recorded in history, were for waging war to its utmost limits, until justice and right were established throughout the land. He would, of course, have preferred that the dread arbitrament of war should have been avoided; but when it came, who was more vehement than he to prosecute it on principles that could end only with the entire prostration of the South? Most wars, indeed, when waged in civilized states, are either the direct or remote results of the insurrection of the human heart, the human conscience, and the human reason against the attempt of a few privileged men to degrade human nature itself by an insolent assertion of superiority over the great mass of mankind.

But to return to the immediate subject. Sumner's reputation grew day by day, as the great Christian layman of New England, from the time the oration on "The True Grandeur of Nations" was published. The peace societies naturally welcomed so eloquent an adherent; but the series of speeches and addresses which followed it, with his favorite emphasis on RIGHT, — always prominent, with a capital R, or with the whole word in capitals, — so worked into the mind and moral sentiment of Massachusetts that he became at last the Senator of that State in Congress, by the operation of the Darwinian law of natural selection

and "the survival of the fittest" among the contending politicians who desired to obtain the place.

In 1846, a year after his Fourth-of-July oration, he made a new application of its principles in his noble Phi Beta address at Cambridge, on "The Scholar, the Jurist, the Artist, the Philanthropist." The men selected to represent these were John Pickering, Joseph Story, Washington Allston, and William Ellery Channing. Having been present on the occasion of the delivery of this oration, I can bear testimony to the general enthusiasm with which it was received both by the old and the young men who were present; the tribute to Judge Story, especially, was the best compact statement that has ever been made of Story's real contributions to jurisprudence, considered as a science. And yet a young sprig of the law, hardly out of his legal teens, superciliously remarked to one of his companions, as he left the hall, that the whole speech sounded to him as if it were made up out of four *rejected* obituary notices; and the joke made him quite a reputation among the whole body of young gentlemen of his turn of mind, whose wit consisted in sneering at any man who was so demented as to be inspired by any moral enthusiasm whatever for what Sumner emphatically called the "Right."

But the special criticism on Sumner, advanced even by some persons whose minds were absorbed in questions relating to philanthropy, was this,—that he was a pedantic philanthropist. If there is one among Sumner's many orations which may be selected from

the rest as pre-eminently able, it is his college address (1848) on "The Law of Human Progress." After having delivered it before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Union College, Schenectady, New York, he repeated it before scores of popular lyceums in New England and New York. The audiences were doubtless amazed that a proposition which they were prepared to accept without question was historically considered, that the obscure hints of the law in ancient poets and philosophers were elaborately set forth, and that the theories of Descartes, Pascal, Vico, Leibnitz, Lessing, Perrault, Fontenelle, Turgot, Condorcet, and a host of other modern writers were quoted to prove his ultimate conclusion, that, in the words of Pascal, the succession of men, as they appear age after age, may be regarded as one man, "who lives always, and learns continually." A quick-witted woman, who had heard the lecture at a village lyceum, told me that when Sumner first announced his proposition, she agreed to it at once as an obvious truth. "But," she added, "when he went on, summoning this and that great man of whom I had never heard to testify to its validity, I began to grow suspicious; the truism took on more and more the character of a paradox; and after his citations of authorities had come to an end, I came to the conclusion that human progress was one of Sumner's benevolent heresies, and was inclined to disbelieve in it altogether."

Yet the value of Sumner's historical method of treating the genealogy of freedom, and the importance

that his large legal and general learning gave to his arguments for human rights, were at once evident when he became a member of the Senate of the United States, and plunged into a hand-to-hand and mind-to-mind fight with the accomplished lawyers and debaters who thought, or pretended to think, that the truisms accepted at most New England firesides were damnable paradoxes, which all friends of the Union and the Constitution must passionately denounce or derisively reject. Then the laborious antiquarian of liberty came in to reinforce its resolute champion, citing precedents as fluently as he asserted principles, and basing the disputed proposition that two and two make four on a mass of accredited authorities in matters of government and legislation which were entirely independent of the judgments of his own intellect and the monitions of his own individual conscience. Thus he could not be contemptuously dismissed by his brother Senators as a mere "freedom screecher," for he screeched Grotius and Puffendorf; screeched L'Hôpital and Turgot; screeched Hale, Holt, Mansfield, Chatham, Camden, Burke, and Fox; screeched Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, Jay, Marshall, Jackson, Story, and Webster, and never seemed to indulge in an impulse of enthusiasm without having in his brain an authority which justified the words that came hot from his heart. Therefore, what struck popular audiences as pedantry became, when Sumner entered the Senate of the United States, an element of power. His legal opponents, treating him at first



as a mere enthusiast, were soon forced to admit that the briefless barrister they affected to despise had employed the time which they had spent in the practice of the law in local courts, with fat fees as the just reward of their industry, in a patient and prolonged study of every branch of law, national and international; that he was intimately acquainted with the most important decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States, and of the judgments of the State tribunals so far as they bore on the subject which happened to be under discussion; and that the attempt to put him down by technical objections ended in rousing a kind of legal porcupine, bristling all over with technicalities, and shooting out his pointed quills to the right and the left, never more delighted than when his political enemies called forth the special capacity in which he pre-eminently excelled. His vast memory became indeed "a tremendous engine of legislative oppression" when its stores of precedents, legal or historical, were called forth by the questions, the taunts, the sneers, or the invectives of his political adversaries.

The great body of the reformers and philanthropists of the country at last settled on Sumner as *their* man, because they found that in a national assembly which included lawyers and jurists he could bring learning to the aid of moral enthusiasm, and hunt up precedents to sustain all the principles which he and they mutually advocated. This was all the more important, because such a combination of the technical

lawyer and the philanthropic statesman was a rare phenomenon in our politics. They came to the conclusion that though four added to four made eight in the minds of simple people, it might mean nine or eighty-eight in the minds of members of Congress; and they witnessed with ever-increasing admiration the long array and immense weight of the authorities which the Senator from Massachusetts brought to bear on this proposition of moral arithmetic, when its soundness was vehemently questioned by eminent publicists both from the South and North. But as Pulteney, the great opponent of Walpole, said, nearly a century and a half ago, "The heads of parties are, like the heads of snakes, carried on by the tails;" and Sumner was the head of a party within his party, which was clamorous for every new advance in the path which eventually led to negro emancipation. He developed by degrees a kind of moral implacability, derived from the uncompromising ethical fierceness of his chief supporters. He could bear ordinary taunts and invectives with fortitude, but when suspicions were suggested that he was not up to the requirements of "the party of right," he was greatly disturbed. The charge that any one was ahead of *him* in the legislative championship of justice and freedom, and had grounds for inveighing against his short-comings in the cause, inflicted on him an immedicable wound, unless it was healed by an immediate proposal of some new measure, which it might take a year of debate to get organized into a law.

Sumner was early accused of the foible or vice of vanity, and the accusation was repeated again and again up to the day of his death. He was doubtless open to the charge; but it is extremely difficult for anybody who knew him intimately and loved him heartily to state the peculiar form this foible assumed, considered as one of the many ingredients which went to make up his character, so that those who knew him not can view it in its relations with the nobler and predominating qualities of his nature. To him there was a glory, perhaps sometimes a vain-glory, in doing a good act, in making a good speech, or in writing a good book. If, in the early days of his career, anything done by himself attracted the attention of men he esteemed, he delighted in showing to his intimate acquaintances the flattering letters he received; but he delighted even more in the success of his friends. If Hillard wrote a notable article in the "North American Review," if Longfellow published a new poem, or Prescott a new history, or Lieber a new work on the philosophy of politics, or Story a new treatise elucidating some difficult department of law, he expended all his energies in the attempt to set forth its merits. He was more vain, if the expression may be allowed, of the works of his friends than of his own. He wished that everything they wrote should be properly appreciated, and that the public opinion should be in accord with his own. It is impossible to compute the amount of labor he consumed in aiding his literary and legal brethren when

any one of them was engaged in an enterprise which required toilsome research. His learning and his time were always at their disposal, and his glory in *their* glory became occasionally almost vain-glorious. Now vanity, when it becomes a vice, is ever allied to envy, and of envy Sumner had not a particle in his nature. His cordial recognition of the merits of others exceeded in warmth any feeling he might have of his own deservings. Where literature was concerned, he was from the first superior to all political and social prejudices. There was a period, some forty years ago, when a distinguished historian, of strong Democratic principles, was personally the most unpopular man in Boston, where he held an important political office. "Why," a cultivated gentleman said to me at this time, "do you young men of the —— Lyceum invite him to lecture before you?" "We invited him because, being an eminent man of letters, we supposed we should attract to our course of lectures persons of culture like yourself." "Then you have made a great mistake. He is a person tolerated by nobody — except by Charles Sumner and William H. Prescott, who tolerate everybody." This was really a tribute to Sumner's magnanimity, as he had then little sympathy with the political views of the man whom Boston society, through one of its mouthpieces, thus inexorably proscribed. The linking of his name with that of Prescott, the most genial and amiable of human beings, was also honorable to him.

Not many years after this, Sumner himself came



under the ban of "good society." The occasion was a debate at a meeting of the Boston Prison Discipline Society (1847). He had done or said before this some things which offended the inner circles of Boston society, but in setting forth his views on prison discipline, he in the heat of debate made some needlessly cutting remarks on persons of the first respectability in the city, and he was thenceforth voted by them to be "vulgar." His offences against what was considered social and political decorum went on increasing year after year, and the houses where he had before been a welcome visitor closed their doors to him one after the other. It is curious that this fashionable ostracism continued after he had made himself a great reputation in the Senate of the United States, and held the position of chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. He was a political force of the first rank, in the opinion of ambassadors of foreign states, when numbers of the commercial and manufacturing aristocracy of his native city rated and berated him as a vulgar fanatic. Mr. Samuel Hooper—a Boston merchant, who represented Boston in the national House of Representatives for many years, before, during, and after the war of the Rebellion, and who was an intimate friend of Sumner—told me that one of his solid mercantile friends once asked him how he managed to get along with "that fellow Sumner."

"Oh, very well," was the reply. "I meet him very often. He appears to be invited to every party given



in Washington. You can't go anywhere without meeting him."

"But you don't say he is considered a gentleman? You don't say that he is a man that one would ask, now, to dine at your table or mine?"

"No," Mr. Hooper rejoined, with that dry, delicious, and quietly malicious humor which characterized him, "I don't think that it would become *you* to invite him to *your* house. But society in Washington is mixed up of heterogeneous elements such as we never find in Boston. There is, you know, a lot of ambassadors from the various countries of Europe, — dukes, earls, barons, knights, and other persons with this or that title prefixed to their names, — and they are compelled, for political reasons, to invite all kinds of persons to their dinners. Sumner seems to be their favorite guest; but I would not, of course, advise you to invite him to dinner. In Boston we are naturally more cautious in selecting the persons who are to eat our meats and drink our wines. In Washington we have to be less discriminating."

And the good Boston merchant departed, fully assured that his friend Hooper entirely agreed with him as to the propriety of excluding such a fanatic as Sumner from the inner sanctuary of his own unpolluted dwelling. And yet at this very time Sumner was recognized at the seat of government as one of the powers to be consulted in the settlement of matters which intimately affected the prosperity of the commerce of Boston, in common with that of the whole commerce of the country.

In questions relating to domestic affairs, Sumner was almost always in collision with his Democratic opponents, and often with his Republican friends. In foreign affairs, however, he generally carried with him both the Democratic and the Republican members of his special committee of the Senate. This was owing primarily to his exceptional knowledge of international law, the study of which had occupied his attention from the time he entered the Law School at Cambridge; but this advantage was supplemented by his immense correspondence with the leaders of European opinion. Many of these leaders were occupants of offices under their respective governments; others were professors of international law in the universities of England, France, and Germany; wherever, indeed, there was a man competent to deliver a wise opinion on the law of nations, whether in office or out of it, Sumner contrived that a private letter from that person addressed to himself should be an element which should properly be considered in the judgment of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations as to the immediate question before them. It is probable that Mr. Pierce, in the forth-coming volumes of his "Life of Sumner," will demonstrate how Lord Palmerston was forced to abandon his early insolent pretensions regarding "belligerency" by the knowledge which Sumner possessed, through his private correspondence, that some eminent member of the House of Commons would rise on some occasion, and put a question to the first Lord of the Treasury which it would be awkward for him

to answer. That question would be asked, because Sumner had suggested it to one of his numerous correspondents who were members of the House. Indeed, it may be confidently asserted that there was a series of communications between influential members of the English House of Commons and House of Lords, addressed (privately, of course) to Mr. Sumner, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, which seriously influenced the action of the governments of the United States and Great Britain. The power that Sumner obtained was due to his exact information regarding the real public opinion underlying all the votes of Parliament and all the judgments of the press. This power he exercised with a kind of inexorable and implacable persistence, knowing that if his demands were resisted, England would be placed in the position of a power of the second rank in Europe. "That," he once told me, "is my object. If England should abandon her proud pre-eminence among the governments of Europe as the special representative of civil and religious liberty, if she should, in her relations to our country, dare to violate the recognized principles of international law, she must be inevitably reduced to the ignominious position of a power of the second class. My speech, which has so often been laughed at, and which every English journal denounces, — though not one of the newspapers has ever condescended to print it in full, — is really pondered by the shrewd ministers and diplomatists of other European governments. They

know that until the questions I have mooted have been settled, England cannot be considered a power of the first rank, because she has not settled her debt of justice to us. We have shown a capacity of improvising armies and navies which naturally excites surprise abroad; and so long as Great Britain insolently denies our right to have the differences between us adjusted by fair arbitration, she has a terrible enemy on her flank should she choose to indulge in the luxury of war."

The relations between Mr. Seward and Sumner during the administration of Andrew Johnson were of a singular kind, and explain the difficulties he afterward unsuccessfully encountered in his dealings with Mr. Fish during the administration of President Grant. Seward and Sumner were old political and personal friends, and understood each other perfectly when they came into political hostility. They were generally in accord as to the foreign policy of the government at the time they were most vehemently at variance on the domestic question of reconstruction. It was pleasant to listen to Sumner as he narrated any one of his many interviews with the Secretary of State. Thus, he would say: "As soon as I heard of the position of Seward on this question, I hurried to his house to expostulate with him. Once together in his private room I immediately began: 'Mr. Seward, you have lost the great opportunity of your life to be ranked among the most illustrious of our statesmen. You have done much more. You have forfeited by



this act a large part of your reputation among reformers and philanthropists, which you had justly acquired by your efforts in the cause of justice and freedom. This last offence is inexpiable, unless it be at once repented of and disclaimed. History will hold you up as one of those men who met a great occasion, on which the happiness and welfare of oppressed millions depended, by a weak compliance with the intrigues, the false statements, and the sophistical logic of their oppressors. I beg you to pause in time.' And then," Sumner would add, with exquisite *naïveté*, "Seward would get mad [as what man would not?], and denounce me and my political friends as fools and fanatics; and, you know, he was very liberal of those profane adjectives which men in excitement apply to fools and fanatics. And so we would go on for perhaps half an hour in the fiercest contention, until our mutual noble rage was exhausted. Then Seward, recovering his equanimity, would say, 'Sumner, let us leave this matter, where we cannot agree, and proceed to foreign affairs, where, I think, we have no radical cause of difference. Now I am placed, as Secretary of State, in a peculiarly embarrassing position as to foreign ambassadors. While this question of belligerency is pending between our government and that of Great Britain we cannot consider any claims of other governments, however just they may be. I wish you would allow me to say, if Mr. —, representing —, and Baron —, representing —, or any other of the European ministers,



call upon me for redress, that the trouble is not in my department, but in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. As you are the chairman of that committee, and all the claims are in your possession, it may expose you to some misrepresentation, perhaps some obloquy; but I think it would be more proper that you should bear the burden than I. Of course, we cannot consider any claim from any quarter until Great Britain has receded from her first pretension.' And so we would have another half-hour's talk, perfectly friendly on both sides, in which it was agreed that I should be referred to as the obnoxious person who obstructed the consideration of any claims, until Great Britain had acknowledged the principle on which all should be settled. When the ambassadors came to me, I always told them that a few minutes' conversation with the British minister would inform them of the real difficulty in the case. So, you see, though Seward and I were at swords' points on many questions, we got along together very well in respect to matters of foreign policy. We never really quarrelled, though we sometimes violently disagreed."

One can easily understand why "a new hand" in the office of Secretary of State, like Mr. Fish, who had little of Mr. Seward's flexibility, could not contrive to fall into agreeable relations with the chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and why President Grant came positively to hate him. Sumner had become so accustomed to dominate in matters of state, was so blunt and belligerent in his

conversations with Lincoln and Seward, that he could hardly understand why his outspoken advice should not be received by a new administration as it had been received by the old. Seward's appreciation of his mastery of foreign affairs, which was not only due to Sumner's knowledge of international law, but to his extensive correspondence with the leaders of English and European opinion on every disputed question which came up during and after the war, prevented him from ever getting into any quarrel with Sumner which would dissolve their personal friendship. Even after, as I have said, he had exchanged epithets with Sumner which would have justified, to the Southern mind, an exchange of pistol-bullets, he would say, "Now, I desire to see your last letters from ———, from Lord ———, from the Duke of ———, and any other correspondents of yours in Europe. The despatch I am going to write requires all the *interior* information I can possibly obtain regarding the real feelings and intentions of the men who represent public opinion abroad." Mr. Seward felt that it would be folly to quarrel with a senator who not only had the principles of international law in his brain, but had the opinions of its latest expositors in his pocket. Mr. Lincoln, again, so clearly discerned the impolicy of making an enemy of the formidable Massachusetts Senator, who so specially represented the moral sentiment of the Northern people, that he bore with much magnanimity Sumner's somewhat rude intrusions of advice as to what should be the Presi-

dent's policy. A few days before Lincoln's second inauguration as President, Sumner called at the White House, and told him that he was determined to defeat in the Senate his favorite measure regarding Louisiana, because it embodied a vicious principle, which would be quoted as a precedent when any large scheme of reconstruction, applying to all the rebel States, might be brought forward. Lincoln blandly listened to the Senator's remonstrances, and replied: "Mr. Sumner, I am not convinced by your arguments; and as to your threat of defeating the bill, I can tell you it is impossible, for I know that a clear majority of the Senate is in its favor." "But I tell you, Mr. President," answered Sumner, "it shall and will be defeated." "Try it," was the quiet retort. Sumner did try it. He appeared on the last night of the session of Congress with a small law library, partly on his desk, and partly piled up on either side of it. The bill was introduced, and it was supposed that it would be immediately passed. Sumner, however, had the floor, and began to speak. After he had spoken an hour or two, it occurred to Senator Wade, of Ohio, that it would be well to ask Sumner — as the session of Congress would soon expire, and as there was much necessary business still remaining to be done — how long the Senator from Massachusetts intended to occupy the attention of the Senate. Sumner replied, in his most courteous tones, that he feared he could not get through his argument in less than six hours; the Senator from Ohio must see, from the books he

had about him, every one of which contained matter bearing on the question of debate, and from which he proposed to make copious extracts, that his speech must be of unusual length, and that he could not promise that it would come to a close before the legal session of Congress came to an end. Wade, who had in his charge what was, in effect, Lincoln's bill, was on this announcement compelled to abandon it. Sumner thus managed to have the whole great subject of reconstruction postponed to the period when it could be discussed in all its larger relations to the welfare of both sections of the country.

It is very likely that this incident, as Sumner told it to me, may be inaccurate in details. If so, the fault is in my memory, not in his long narrative. But his object in telling it was to illustrate a beautiful quality of Lincoln's character. "I thought," he said, "that the President would consider my opposition as a personal affront. Instead of that, you may suppose my surprise when he sent me a note on the next day, asking me to accompany Mrs. Lincoln, in *his* carriage, to the ceremonies of the inauguration, and also to accompany her to the inauguration ball in the evening. As to the ball, you may imagine the kind of wonder which was excited when, with Mrs. Lincoln on my arm, I made my way through the thick throng of ladies and gentlemen present, and placed her in her selected seat. The thing was nothing in itself; but it still, I thought, read a lesson to shrewd politicians, when they had to undertake the task of pleasing such a man as Abraham Lincoln."



It is evident that Sumner's way of rushing in upon Lincoln and Seward with his vehement advice was not adapted to the mental and moral constitution of Grant and Fish. Perhaps they would not concede the value of the information he was able to give, while they resented the strenuousness, amounting almost to physical force, with which he urged his opinions on their attention. The quarrel which ensued came in the natural order of things.

Much has been said about Sumner's lack of humorous perception; but this defect has been somewhat overstated. There was, it must be admitted, a certain tendency in his eloquence to grandiloquence, — a tendency which was in his mind as well as in his words. Coleridge, in the admirable criticism on his friend Wordsworth, in the "Biographia Literaria," states that the great poet sometimes brings in thoughts and images too great for the subject they illustrate; and he calls this "mental bombast," as distinguished from verbal. It is a vice of style into which serious minds are apt to slide, when they are deficient in that sense of humor which would instinctively correct or prevent it. Sumner undoubtedly was not without his full share of this defect. Still, in my conversations with him I often found him genially open to impressions of the humorous side of the questions he commonly debated with passionate fervor. At the time when he was among the most strenuous of those Republicans who opposed the renomination of Grant for the Presidency, I called upon him one evening at his rooms in Boston. He



immediately began to declaim against the nomination of Grant as a "nomination not fit to be made" for a second term. In a pause, perhaps of half a minute, when his vehemence was somewhat exhausted, and he stopped to gather breath for a new assault, I took the opportunity to remark that what he had just said reminded me of something that I had read in a newspaper the day before. "What was it?" he eagerly asked. "Oh, nothing but this,— a coincidence of opinion between your friend B. and your friend Agassiz." "B. and Agassiz! how could they have anything in common? What has Agassiz to do with the next Republican nomination for the Presidency?" "Well," I replied, "I know nothing about the matter but what the newspaper states. There is an absurd report abroad that Agassiz, on geological grounds, predicts that the world will be smashed to pieces on October 22. The news was communicated to your friend B. while he was absorbed in arranging multitudinous rows of figures demonstrating that Grant could not be re-elected, and he only paused a moment in his calculations to exclaim, 'Good! Anything to beat Grant!'" At this Sumner absolutely roared with laughter, and I feared he would drop from his chair, so convulsed was he with the sudden turn given to his serious thinking. I then ventured to add that he must, of course, know the motto which was suggested for Mr. Greeley, the candidate of the Democrats and the discontented Republicans. "No," he said, recovering his accustomed earnestness; "what is it?" "Simply this: 'If any man

attempts to tear down the American flag, bail him on the spot!'" And then he laughed more uproariously than before. Stale as the jokes were, he had never heard of them; but he must have had some sense of humor to appreciate their point when introduced, as they were, in the height of his moral passion against what he thought the sins of Grant's administration.

On the other hand, there were occasions when he seemed singularly obtuse to the most exquisite examples of humor. In 1853 was published a book which ranks with the most fascinating of all modern biographies, — the "Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals," edited and compiled by Tom Taylor. It is one of the mysteries of what is called literary success that this work should not have obtained a circulation almost equal to "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Speaking only as one reader, I can say that at the time they were published I happened to take up each work early in the evening of one day, and it was very late in the morning of the next that I went to bed. In both cases sleep was impossible until the biography and the novel came to an end. In Haydon's autobiography, full as it is of interesting matter, there is no description more deliciously humorous than his account of a dinner which he gave in December, 1817, for the purpose of introducing Keats to Wordsworth, with Charles Lamb as one of the party. "Lamb," he says, "soon got delightfully merry. He made a speech, and voted me absent, and made them drink my health." Then he turned

to Wordsworth, and said, "Now, you old Lake Poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?" After the dinner came tea, and then a stranger came in, who, like Wordsworth, was a comptroller of stamps, and had a vague notion that his brother comptroller was an eminent poet. As Lamb was dozing by the fire, the comptroller, being in literary company, naturally desired to show himself competent to appreciate poets, and turning to Wordsworth, solemnly asked, "Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?" The scene that ensued is fully described by Haydon; but the special point of it is that Lamb took up a candle, and walking up to the prosaic comptroller, asked, with great solemnity, "Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?" The result of the whole series of embarrassments arising from Lamb's reiterated demand to have "another look at that gentleman's organs" was that Haydon and Keats, nearly bursting with suppressed laughter, forced him into the adjoining painting-room; and while Wordsworth and others of the company were trying to pacify the enraged functionary, Lamb, struggling with his captors in the painting-room, was heard at intervals exclaiming, "Who is that fellow? Allow me to see his organs once more." It would appear to be impossible that any person who had caught a glimpse of the peculiar humor of Charles Lamb should not perceive that this incident was a delightful practical specimen of it; yet Sumner, referring to Haydon's detailed narrative of the occurrence, remarked to me: "I am sorry that such

a story as that should have been published. *We* who love and *appreciate* Charles Lamb must be pained at seeing him represented in such a disreputable light as insulting the guest of his host in so unjustifiable a manner. He must have taken too much wine at dinner, or he could never have been guilty of such an indecorum." Yet Sumner, while he made this remark, would have felt offended if you had questioned his capacity to enjoy the humor of Lamb. It was plain, from all the circumstances narrated at the dinner, that Lamb was not intoxicated at all. His conduct was a humorous protest against the commonplace comptroller of stamps, who had asked, "Don't you think that Milton was a great poet?" Phrenology was then a theory new in Great Britain, and Lamb's demand to explore the "bumps" of the man who had intruded himself into literary and artistic society without the remotest notion of what was indisputably established among them as settled questions, ridiculous to doubt, was but a practical, a characteristic, outbreak of his peculiar humor. Yet Sumner could not see it.

But those who knew Sumner most intimately must heartily recognize those commanding traits of character which made his foibles and deficiencies appear of small account in their general judgment of the man. He was a grand specimen of physical, intellectual, and moral manhood, ready to do and to suffer anything in the cause of what he considered true, just, honorable, and humane. Far from being confined to the question of slavery, which was his special task, he, in the spirit



of Bacon, proudly took all benevolent and intelligent legislation "for his province;" and he was as sound on financial questions as on those questions which made him the special champion of liberty and justice. Above all, he was intrepid, and can hardly be said to have ever felt the sensation of fear whenever he had a noble cause to advocate or an absurd opinion to controvert. On many occasions — indeed, on all prominent occasions of his career as a statesman — he was called upon to exhibit what is called "backbone;" and the bravery in his will and in his heart always answered to that which was in his brain.

Sumner, in common with all thoughtful and cultivated persons who speak the English tongue, had a just admiration for the genius and character of Edmund Burke. He sympathized deeply with the philanthropic spirit which animated the works of that illustrious philosophical statesman, even when he differed from his opinions. Probably the compliment he most prized was that paid to him by the eldest son of Earl Fitzwilliam, as he and Lord Milton were looking at the portrait of Burke by Sir Joshua Reynolds in a gallery of paintings in Wentworth House. "It seems to me, Mr. Sumner," said Lord Milton, "that in this position, and in this light, there is a marked resemblance between your countenance and that of Burke."

Sumner spent the leisure hours of the last years of his life in carefully correcting his orations and speeches. They were published in successive volumes, each receiving the last touch of the author's pen, with



a special solicitude that every quotation should be verified. He hoped that his spoken words would become a part of American literature, as the speeches of Burke were indisputably an essential portion of English literature, — “the third Englishman,” as Choate was wont to call him. He did not, of course, indulge in the pleasing conceit that his speeches were equal to Burke’s; but he felt that in preparing and delivering them, he had some claim to participate in the exultation of soul with which Burke welcomed, on a memorable occasion, the glorious unpopularity which resulted from the difference between himself and his Bristol constituents on certain questions where justice and humanity were concerned. After declaring with an honest pride that no charge had been made against him of venality or neglect of duty, he proudly adds: “It is not alleged that to gratify any anger or revenge of my own or of my party, I have had a share in wronging or oppressing any description of men, or any one man in any description. No! The charges against me are all of one kind: that I have pushed the general principles of justice and benevolence too far, — further than a cautious policy would warrant, and further than the opinions of many would go along with me. In every accident which may happen through life, in pain, in sorrow, in depression, and distress, I will call to mind *this* accusation; and be comforted.” Burke, in revising his speech, evidently put a semicolon rather than a mere comma after the word “accusation,” in order to give emphasis to the pause which naturally followed,

as he spoke, before he drew "comfort" from the "accusation." This simple, dispassionate statement stands now as one of the grandest passages in English eloquence. The great master of that eloquence had been constantly libelled, caricatured, misapprehended, and denounced for those virtues which most endear him to that posterity to which he confidently appealed ; and in this sentence he lifted obloquy into a spiritual region of the soul, where it became a crown of glory, — a supreme source of moral self-satisfaction beyond that which any selfish statesman can feel in the moment when his ambition is gratified to the utmost by reaching that height of power to which his energies may have been unscrupulously directed. Sumner, also, had the noble consolation and comfort which Burke experienced when he uttered those immortal words. The charges against *him* were that *he*, too, had pushed the principles of justice and benevolence further than a cautious policy would warrant ; but fortunately he lived long enough to witness that the irresistible tide of events forced his party to admit, as politic, measures which he had urged on the ground of principle, and to adopt his seemingly abstract maxims of justice and benevolence as the most necessary and efficient of political expedients.

## GEORGE TICKNOR.<sup>1</sup>

It was the good fortune of George Ticknor that he could reside in no place, even for a few weeks, without enjoying the advantages of the best society in it. Accordingly his letters and journals are crammed with records of his interviews with magnates and celebrities. The ordinary republican, as he reads the work, is dazzled by the procession of kings, princes, grand-dukes, dukes, earls, and counts, which passes before his astonished eyes ; and the man of letters, or the man of science, is no less surprised at the throng of persons, associated in his mind with the great intellectual achievements of the first half of the nineteenth century, with whom Mr. Ticknor was on terms of intimacy.

The preparation of this Memoir was confided to Mr. George S. Hillard, in every respect qualified to perform such a labor of love ; but after the conclusion of the tenth chapter he was prostrated by sudden illness, and the duty of completing it was undertaken by Mrs. Ticknor and her eldest daughter, who have executed the task with general good taste and judg-

<sup>1</sup> *Life, Journals, and Letters of George Ticknor.* Boston : James R. Osgood & Co. 1876. 2 vols. 8vo. pp. 524, 533.

ment, and have refrained almost too carefully from allowing affection to urge them into any undue praise of the husband and father, whose worth, talents, and learning they commemorate.

Mr. Ticknor was fortunate in his parentage, as in everything else. Both his father and mother were educated persons, and both had been engaged in the noble profession of teaching. His father, Elisha Ticknor, a graduate of Dartmouth College, seems to have drifted into trade only because failing health compelled him to relinquish his occupation as a teacher; and in trade he acquired the competence which enabled him to gratify the scholarly ambitions of his darling son.

George Ticknor was born on the first day of August, 1791. His early education was undertaken by his parents; he was sent to Dartmouth College in 1805, and for two years received the kind of instruction which was then dispensed to ingenuous youth in that institution of learning; was, by his own confession, idle there, and learned little; but in 1807, on his return to Boston, was put by his father under the tuition of the Rev. Dr. Gardiner, with whom he studied for three years, obtaining from that forcible and genial scholar a strong taste for classical learning as well as a moderate proficiency in it. He then studied law in the office of William Sullivan; in 1813 he was admitted to the bar, and was so successful during the first and only year in which he practised his profession, that his fees not only paid the rent of his office, but also

mounted up to a sum sufficient to discharge the moderate bill of his office boy. In spite of this splendid triumph of professional skill, he came to the conclusion that his talents and tastes did not lie in the direction of the law. His intimacy with all the persons who then represented the best intellectual society of Boston and its vicinity, — Gardiner, Buckminster, Wells, Dexter, Sullivan, Prescott, Parker, Warren, John Adams, — inflamed him with a desire to make himself a scholar and a cultivated man of letters. Among other things, he was interested in the German language and literature. In order to gratify this mental whim, he had to borrow a German grammar from one friend, and to send all the way up to a town in New Hampshire for a German dictionary which was the precious possession of another.

He decided, after scanning the means of getting an education worthy of the name in the United States, to go to Germany in search of it. Before venturing on this enterprise, he visited Washington; dined with President Madison; stayed some days with Jefferson at Monticello; saw every prominent American that it was desirable to see, between Boston and Richmond; and returned to Massachusetts fully equipped with such letters of introduction from these men to their friends abroad, as would enable him to invade European society with an adequate social force. Indeed, in reading the whole body of his diaries and correspondence, we are specially impressed by the potency acquired by a personage who is literally a man of



"letters," — all doors flying open when the magical letters are produced.

In May, 1815, when young Ticknor arrived in Liverpool, he learned to his surprise, and somewhat to his dismay, that Napoleon had escaped from Elba and was established in Paris. Bred in the Federal school of American politics, he expected that all England would feel more than his indignation at the event; but he found that Roscoe the historian, and the Whigs he met at Roscoe's table were opposed to the war against "the disturber of the peace of Europe." Calling on his way to London on Dr. Parr, he records two utterances of that pompous clerical scholar and fierce Whig politician. "Thirty years ago, sir," said the Doctor, "I turned on my heel when I heard you called *rebels*, and I was always glad that you beat us." As to the return of Napoleon, he exclaimed with his peculiar lisp, "Thus, I should not think I had done my duty, if I went to bed any night without praying for the success of Napoleon Bonaparte." In London Mr. Ticknor met Sir Humphry Davy, Campbell, Gifford, Byron, and Lady Byron, and all turned to him the amiable sides of their characters. Gifford, the editor of the Tory "Quarterly Review," — "a position," says Hazlitt, "for which he was eminently qualified by a happy combination of defects, natural and acquired," — Gifford, the libeller of the United States, and a critic of the school of distaste, disappointed his anticipations. "I found him a short, deformed, and ugly little man, with a large head, sunk between his

shoulders, and one of his eyes turned outward; but withal, one of the best-natured, most open, and well-bred gentlemen I have met." Gifford introduced him to Byron. It is curious to the present generation of readers, who know what Byron was in 1815, to read the account of the young American's impression of his character at that time. Byron, as he appeared to Ticknor, contradicted all his expectations. "Instead of having a thin and rather sharp and anxious face, as he has in his pictures, it is round, open, and smiling; his eyes are light and not black; his air easy and careless, not forward and striking; and I found his manners affable and gentle, the tones of his voice low and conciliating, his conversation gay, pleasant, and interesting in an uncommon degree." Byron talked on various subjects, — America, his own poems, Lord Holland, Scott, Jeffrey, Rogers, — in a style which would not have misbecome a teacher of a Sunday-school. Then a friend rushed into the room with the announcement of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, and his retreat toward Paris. Byron paused a moment, and then exclaimed, "I am d——d sorry for it!" After another slight pause, he added, "I didn't know but I might live to see Castlereagh's head on a pole. But I suppose I shan't now." After Meade's victory at Gettysburg, think of Bryant or Longfellow exclaiming, "I am d——d sorry for it!" Byron, in this flash of seemingly eccentric caprice, indicated the elemental character of his genius, which was independent of nationality as of

all the other constraints imposed by civilization. Ticknor did not seem to understand the import of Byron's impatient exclamation. It remains, however, as a most remarkable indication of that passion for revolt and anarchy, which was inherent in his emotional nature, and that scorn of all the limitations on self-will which was a characteristic of his somewhat chaotic mind. What struck Ticknor most in his intercourse with Byron were his superficial qualities, his geniality, his toleration, his frank confession of his own faults, his readiness to do justice to all who might be called his rivals in the race for poetical eminence, and his tender courtesy to his wife. The poet, indeed, seems to have had a liking for the young American, and to have shown him only the amiable traits of his character. "I think," says Ticknor in his diary, "I have received more kindness from Lord Byron than from any person in England on whom I had not the regular claim of a letter of introduction."

On the last day of June, 1815, Ticknor left London for Göttingen, where he remained for twenty months, pursuing his studies at that leading German university, with an ardor which left him no time for amusement or society. The intellectual atmosphere of the place was favorable to habits of industry. "If a man who means to have any reputation as a scholar," he wrote, "sees his best friend once a week, it is thought quite often enough." Here he first felt the vast distance between German and American scholarship. Had he been naturally inclined to indolence,

he would have been shamed into exertion by the fact that some of his instructors were not much older than himself, and appeared to be his superiors, rather by their accomplishments than their talents. The acquirements of his Greek tutor, Dr. Schultze, forced from him the confession that in the United States "we do not know what a Greek scholar is; we do not even know the process by which a man is to be made one." Stung by the spirit of emulation, he devoted his time from five in the morning to ten at night, with short interruptions, to his various studies, learning, among other things, that recreation may be found in some of the finer forms of work; that the weariness resulting from labor undertaken from a sense of duty is charmed away by the labor which is genially welcomed as a means of delight. Probably Ticknor was never happier than during the twenty months he passed in Göttingen, "unresting and unhasting" in his tireless pursuit of knowledge,—not "under difficulties," but under the facilities of such teachers and professors as Dissen, Benecke, Schultze, Eichhorn, Gauss, and Blumenbach.

In the autumn of 1816, during a vacation of six weeks, he visited, among other places, Leipsic, Dresden, Berlin, Wittenberg, Halle, and Weimar, well recommended by letters of introduction to the notabilities of northern Germany. At Weimar he had, of course, an interview with Goethe. Indeed, if Ticknor had taken it into his head to go to Olympus, the first person he would have sought, with a letter of



introduction in his pocket, would have been Jupiter. In his diary he describes the great German as "something above the middle size, large but not gross, with gray hair, a dark, ruddy complexion, and full, rich black eyes, which, though dimmed with age, are still very expressive. His whole countenance is old ; and though his features are quiet and composed, they bear decided traces of the tumult of early feeling and passion." Goethe was simple in manner, spoke in praise of Wolf, and in reference to Byron's separation from his wife, said it was involved in such mystery, and was so poetical in itself, that if Byron had invented it he could hardly have had a more fortunate subject for his genius. "He fervently deplored the want of extemporary eloquence in Germany, and said, what I never heard before, but which is eminently true, that the English is kept a much more living language by its influence." "Here," said Goethe, "we have no eloquence: our preaching is a monotonous, middling declamation; public debate we have not at all; and if a little inspiration sometimes comes to us in our lecture-rooms, it is out of place, for eloquence does not teach." In after-life, Ticknor was wont to quote this last observation in a more restricted sense than Goethe probably meant it. Eloquence *does* teach when it not only communicates knowledge, but the thirst for knowledge. Scientists of ardent natures, like Tyndall, William B. Rogers, and Agassiz, inflame students with a love of the subjects on which they discourse. The teacher who suc-



ceeds best, is he who puts his whole soul into his speech, and thus imparts his soul to others in the very process of conveying information to their understandings. Barry Cornwall's ideal of the true teacher can never be antiquated : —

“For he was like the sun, giving me light,  
Pouring into the caves of my young brain  
Knowledge from his bright fountains.”

In March, 1817, Mr. Ticknor, then at the age of twenty-five, left Göttingen for an extended tour in France, Italy, Spain, and Great Britain. At Frankfort he met Frederick von Schlegel, whom he found to be “a short, thick little gentleman, with the ruddy, vulgar health of a full-fed father of the Church,” full of knowledge, and eager to impart it. In the evening of the same day he visited Von Berg, the President of the Diet, who impressed him as a man of almost universal information, possessing among other accomplishments a minute knowledge of the history of the American Revolution, which he specially indicated by jocosely directing his wife to give Ticknor a very small cup of tea, if she gave him any at all, because he came from a town which had once rebelliously wasted and destroyed several cargoes of it.

At Paris Ticknor resided nearly five months, and had his usual good fortune in meeting and conversing with all the celebrities, native and foreign, collected in that centre of intellectual Europe. Œhlenschläger, the Danish poet and dramatist, then at the age of

forty, appeared to him "hearty, happy, and gay, enjoying life as well as anybody, but living in Paris knowing and caring for nobody, . . . vain, but not oppressively so." This last trait is felicitously touched. In social intercourse the vain man, whose vanity is but one form of his benevolence, sees others in the same deceptive light in which he views himself. He becomes oppressive only when he diminishes other individualities in magnifying his own. The two men in Paris who made the strongest impression on Ticknor were Germans, A. W. Schlegel and Humboldt. The former, he writes, "wakes at four o'clock in the morning, and, instead of getting up, has his candle brought to him, and reads five or six hours, then sleeps two or three more, and then gets up and works till dinner at six. From this time till ten o'clock he is a man of the world, in society, and overflowing with amusing conversation; but at ten he goes to his study and works until midnight, when he begins the same course again."

Schlegel was undoubtedly a coxcomb in dress and manner, and his affectations were justly subjects of ridicule; but Ticknor does not, in all his interviews with him, sufficiently recognize the fact that he was one of the greatest interpretive critics of the nineteenth century. His lectures on Dramatic Art, delivered in Vienna in 1808, are landmarks in the progress of criticism as it advanced toward something which may be called a science. He told Ticknor that in writing them in German, he had endeavored to keep

before him as models English and French prose, which he preferred to the ordinary prose style of German authors. The young American scholar was able conscientiously to say that he thought the critic had succeeded in this attempt. The wonder is that neither in his journals nor in his letters does he seem to appreciate A. W. Schlegel's supreme gift as a critic,—his power of transforming himself into an inhabitant of the country whose literature he presented and criticised, and of following the development of its literature from age to age, with an imaginative sympathy with the conditions and circumstances under which its masterpieces were produced. The "History of Spanish Literature" would have been a more fascinating, if not a more learned, work, had Ticknor caught from Schlegel the fundamental point of view from which the literature of a nation should be surveyed. We have in these volumes abundant testimonies to Schlegel's knowledge and brilliancy in conversation, but not a word as to those principles of criticism for which he is now remembered among men.

At Paris Ticknor also seems to have had rare opportunities of meeting Alexander von Humboldt,—Alexander the Great, as distinguished even from his eminent brother William. Humboldt in 1817 was in the full flush of his fame, magnificent in physical development as in mental power. Ticknor found that he was superior to all conventions, though the favorite of fashionable society,—sleeping when

he was weary, eating when he was hungry, and studying from ten to fifteen hours out of the twenty-four. If he was invited to dinner at six o'clock, he considered the invitation simply as an opportunity for intellectual amusement and excitement, and really dined at a restaurant at five. His high rank and captivating manners, joined to his prodigious acquirements, rendered him one of the idols of Parisian society. Ticknor in warmly testifying to what he *was*, is provokingly reticent as to what he *said*. He saw also all the prominent persons of the Restoration,—Madame de Staël, Lacretelle, Benjamin Constant, Barante, Villemain, Chateaubriand, Madame Récamier, the Duke and Duchess de Broglie, Lafayette, Talma, and others.

While in Göttingen he received the news of his appointment as Professor of the French and Spanish Languages and the Belles-Lettres, in Harvard College. His letter to his father in relation to this appointment shows him to have been a model son. He thought he could not accept the office without prolonging his European tour some six months, in order to spend that time in Spain, to acquire a competent knowledge of the Spanish language and literature. His acceptance of the post was delayed until November, 1817, when he was in Rome. In September of that year he left Paris for Italy, visiting, on the way, Lafayette, at La Grange. He then proceeded to Geneva, crossed the Alps by the Simplon road, and arrived at Milan on the first of October, and on the



second of November, at Rome. He spent four months in that city engaged in the study of Italian; and under a competent guide "in exploring the different portions of ancient Rome and their ruins." In Italy, as in Germany and France, he endeavored to master the language so that he could speak it well. In high society he found that Italian was not the language of conversation, except at Canova's parties, and sometimes at those of the Portuguese Ambassador. Residence in Rome only perfected the fluency and facility with which he could speak French and German. At last, in despair, he hired a professor of architecture to teach him Italian by explaining to him in that language the principles, theory, and history of the art. He says that of all the sovereigns in Europe he most desired to see the Pope, on account of the firmness and dignity he had displayed in "difficult and distressing circumstances, when kings and governments, of force incomparably greater, had shrunk and yielded" to the autocracy of Napoleon. He was presented by Abbé Taylor, an Irish Catholic, and was accompanied by Professor Bell, the distinguished anatomist of Edinburgh. "On entering we knelt and kissed his hand. He is, you know, very old, but he received us standing, and was dressed with characteristic simplicity and humility as a friar, without the slightest ornament to distinguish his rank. Bell spoke no Italian; and therefore the conversation was chiefly with us, and, as we were Americans, entirely on America. The Pope talked a good deal about our



universal toleration, and praised it as much as if it were a doctrine of his own religion, adding that he thanked God for having at last driven all thoughts of persecution from the world, since persuasion was the only possible means of promoting piety, though violence might promote hypocrisy." The Pope went so far as to declare that the time would come when the New would dictate to the Old World. He spoke with particular emphasis of the naval successes of the United States against the English in the war of 1812. "But," said the Irish Abbé, "the Americans had done very well, because they had always the English for masters." "Yes, M. Abbé," answered the Pope, jocosely, "that is very true; but I would advise you to take care that the scholars do not learn too much for the masters." Indeed, the Bostonian was naturally surprised to hear from the lips of a Pope principles of religious toleration which would have been heartily indorsed by William Ellery Channing, at that time under the ban of Protestant orthodoxy in New England.

From Italy Ticknor proceeded to Spain, where he stayed about six months. The sixty pages of his letters and diary devoted to Spain are full of entertainment and instruction. As soon as he had crossed the Pyrenees he discovered that he had not only passed from one country and climate to another, but had gone back two centuries in time. He found, as regards manners, that Cervantes and Le Sage were the historians on whose statements he should depend for

information. The king he did not hesitate to call a vulgar blackguard; the aristocracy, with some exceptions, appeared to him hopelessly corrupt; the middle class, to be mediocre and inefficient; and the peasants, to constitute the finest *material* he had met in Europe out of which to make a great and generous people, but that this material was either unused or perverted. He had unusual opportunities afforded him of prosecuting his Spanish studies, and the society to which he was introduced was the best in Spain; but he was shocked at the ignorance of librarians and at the bad arrangement and administration of the libraries he explored. In the great library at Madrid he found "confusion worse confounded." In a lumber-room of this library, where there was a great pile of books called useless, and, as his conductor warned him, of no more value than mere waste paper, the second book he took up was La Place's "*Mécanique Céleste*." In November, 1818, he sailed from Lisbon for England, and as quickly as possible left London for Paris, where he found books and means for studying Spanish literature which he had vainly sought in Spain. Socially he enjoyed great advantages, being admitted into all *salons*, whether those of the ultra loyalists or of the liberals. His journals furnish a provoking display of celebrated names, and some piquant descriptions of the persons to whom the names were attached, but little of their conversation which may be considered characteristic.

In the middle of January, 1819, Ticknor arrived in

London. The house he most frequented was Lord Holland's, for there he mingled in a literary and political society such as was unexcelled by any he had seen in Europe, including, as it did, Mackintosh, Brougham, Sydney Smith, Frere, Heber, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Lauderdale, and Lord John Russell, among other frequent guests. Lord Holland was the most gracious of hosts, but his wife was the worst-mannered woman in Great Britain. It is astonishing how he contrived to make his dinners and receptions the most attractive in England, while every Englishman of genius who accepted his invitations was snubbed and insulted, more than once, by his vixenish spouse. The stories told of her conduct make one wonder that men who had any self-respect should submit to her caprices, even when, by submission, they were introduced to such society. Ticknor disliked her from first to last, though he won her regard by the courage with which he replied to an insulting question by a more insulting answer. She informed him that she understood New England was originally colonized by convicts sent over from the mother-country. He retorted that he was not aware of it, but said that some of the Vassall family (the ancestors of Lady Holland) had settled early in Massachusetts; that a house built by one of them was standing in Cambridge; and that a marble monument to one of the family was to be seen in King's Chapel, Boston. She was at first stunned by this impertinence; but in the conversation which ensued she

asked him to send her a drawing of the monument, which on his return to Boston he was careful to do. This is the most conspicuous instance in Lady Holland's long career in which her insolence and malice were fairly rebuked and overthrown. Shall we not exclaim, in view of the victory of our countryman over obstacles from which the first poets, politicians, and publicists of Europe had shrunk appalled, "Bravo, Ticknor"? From that time Lady Holland liked him: he never overcame his dislike of her.

As a natural result of his success in London society, Mr. Ticknor had an opportunity to be invited as a guest to some of the great country mansions of England. He passed two days at Hatfield, the seat of the Marquis of Salisbury, and three days at Woburn Abbey, the seat of the Duke of Bedford. At both of these places he met distinguished personages. His residence in Edinburgh brought him into relation with all the prominent Scotch celebrities, of whom Walter Scott and Playfair appeared to him the best. John Wilson, not then developed into the vehement Professor of Moral Philosophy and the Christopher North of the "Noctes," but known as the author of "The Isle of Palms," seemed to him "a pretending young man." James Hogg was so vulgar that he thought his conversation corresponded to his name, and was strangely out of keeping with the exquisite delicacy of sentiment embodied in his poem of "Kilmeny." Indeed, in Hogg, as in Ben Jonson, fineness of fancy seems to have been a sort of secretion of his



mind, and to exist apart from the general character of the man, which was bluff, rude, and coarse. Mackenzie the novelist appeared to him "a lively little gentleman," voluble in talk on common subjects, but conveying no notion of "The Man of Feeling." Jeffrey, whom he had met before in Boston, he found always charming, but though brilliant in all parties and assemblies, he was seen to best advantage in his own house. Dr. Thomas Brown, the metaphysician, and the successor of Dugald Stewart in the University, impressed him as a man affecting in society a "dapper sort of elegance, and writing poetry just above thread-paper verses." Lord Elgin, then about fifty, he set down as a "fat, round, and stupid man," whose conversation justified what his appearance promised. Scott delighted him beyond measure. Among other experiences of his intercourse with the great poet and novelist, he records going with him to the theatre to see a representation of "Rob Roy," a drama founded on the novel. When the performance was over, Scott turned to him and said, "That's fine, sir; I think that is very fine;" and then looked up to him with "a most comical expression of face, half-way between cunning and humor;" and added, "All I wish is, that Jedediah Cleishbotham could be here to enjoy it!"

Mr. Ticknor left Liverpool on the last day in April, 1819, and arrived in Boston early in June. In August, his introduction to the professorships of the French and Spanish languages and of the Belles-



Lettres, in Harvard College, took place. It is safe to assert that this young professor, at the age of twenty-eight, was the most accomplished student of general literature then resident in the United States. So far as comprehensive culture could fashion a man into largeness and fulness of mind, he was a model professor. He had not only studied hard, and accumulated a valuable library of books selected by himself during his four years' residence abroad, but he had enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a conversational intimacy with most of the first minds in Europe. He had, by contact with such minds, collected, in his own words, "that sort of undefined and indefinite feeling respecting books and authors which exists in Europe as a kind of unwritten tradition, and never comes to us because nobody takes the pains to collect it systematically, though it is often the electric principle that gives life to the dead mass of inefficient knowledge, and vigor and spirit to inquiry." This is one of the profoundest observations in all Ticknor's writings. There is a certain something in the intellect and heart of a prominent statesman, or man of letters, or man of science, which cannot be learned from what he publishes, but which transpires in his familiar talk. Daniel Webster even went so far as to say that conversation, in the large sense of being a commerce between good minds, was the most important element in culture. The secret thought underlying written thought, the secret doubt underlying positive assertion in written books, escape in the genial con-

verse of one strong intellect with another. Ticknor, accordingly, had acquired much more in Europe than was contained in the volumes he brought with him to Boston. It may have been that it was knowledge of this kind which brought him into continual collisions of opinion with the authorities of Harvard College. He appeared as a general reformer of the methods of college instruction ; but after having been an active professor for fifteen years he resigned his position, with the feeling that he had succeeded perfectly in his own department, but had failed miserably in procuring such changes in the other departments as he deemed necessary "to make the large means of the College more effectual for the education of the community." But this is anticipating events. In 1821 he married Miss Anna Eliot, the daughter of one of the first of Boston merchants,—a marriage which was certainly among the happiest recorded in the annals of men of letters. His social position in Boston was in the front rank both of fashion and literary culture. Among his intimate friends were the two Prescotts, father and son, F. C. Gray, Dr. Jacob Bigelow, the Rev. William E. Channing, James Savage, and Daniel Webster. Of these, James Savage—generally known later in life as the genealogist of New England—was, in character, one of the solidest of the "solid men of Boston." He was the soul of integrity and honor ; every form of baseness, meanness, and fraud instinctively shrank from him abashed ; no scoundrel of any kind, however rich or famous, could appear in

any company which he honored with his presence, without slinking away in abject fear of such a chivalric champion of common-sense and common honesty. His hatred of iniquity sometimes blazed out in a fury of wrathful eloquence which amazed those who specially esteemed him as a prodigy of genealogical knowledge, and even disturbed the equanimity of those who chiefly knew him as the most valued and trustworthy of friends. It is curious that James Savage, the most eloquent of men when his soul was stirred to its depths, should now be particularly honored merely as an accurate antiquarian. We have listened to him at times, when his heart, kindled by the memory of some rascalities of politicians he had formerly abhorred, freed his utterance from all the feebleness of old age, and his voice rang in piercing tones through the whole house, and was even heard by passers-by in the street. Thomas Jefferson was his pet aversion, and, when provoked by opposition, his invective against that apostle of democracy gave to his voice a penetrating power, which almost enabled the neighborhood to partake of the edification and enjoyment that were specially intended only for his guests. A certain tough and stalwart manliness characterized all he said and did. It was seen in his piety, in his benevolence, in his social affections, in his mode of conducting business, even in his rapid, defiant walk as he paced the streets. As you passed him on the sidewalk, you felt the city was the safer for having such an embodiment of straightforward

integrity within its limits. In short, he was a model citizen, — a character which, to our national injury, is gradually losing its old command of the respect of voters.

During the years of Mr. Ticknor's labors as a professor, though engaged in a constant conflict with the men who governed Harvard College, he enjoyed unusual opportunities of discoursing with the most eminent Americans of his time. In 1835 he resigned his professorship, and with his family made a second visit to Europe. Judging from the letters and diaries in these volumes, it was a triumphal procession. Every door, however jealously guarded from ordinary intrusion, seems to have felt the magic of Mr. Ticknor's "open sesame." His second invasion of Europe, indeed, was even more victorious than his first. He sought everybody, saw everybody, and was welcomed by everybody. It is useless to record his social exploits in detail. If anybody can name a European celebrity he should have liked to see, during the period between 1835 and 1838, he must be singularly exacting, unless he finds the name of that person in the index of this book. Among other men whom he now met for the second time, he was captivated anew by Sydney Smith. In 1819, in witnessing his witty victories in the contests of wits at Holland House, he had come to the conclusion that Sydney Smith's humorous sallies were really "logic in masquerade;" and when, in 1835, he went to hear him preach at St. Paul's, he decided that the sermon was the best he had ever heard in Great



Britain, though he had listened to archbishops, bishops, and to representatives of all the various degrees of the Episcopal hierarchy. Still, in his second tour one is provoked at the mention of so many names associated with so few ideas. The fashionable lords, ladies, right honorables, and honorables oppress the democratic imagination with a sense of titles of rank divorced from titles to consideration. It is vexatious that Lord this and Lady that, however charming in their surroundings, say nothing which equals in piquancy the ordinary utterances of Grub Street. Without taking the extreme view of Matthew Arnold, that the English aristocracy, while presenting splendid specimens of gentlemanly manners, are still impenetrable to ideas, one is tempted to adopt that opinion in reading Mr. Ticknor's record of his intercourse with them.

It is impossible, in a brief review like the present, to do more than direct the attention of the reader to Mr. Ticknor's accounts of his interviews with Miss Edgeworth and with Wordsworth, — the first the representative of common-sense, and the second of the sense which is uncommon; of his descriptions of Ludwig Tieck, and of his fine readings of Shakspeare's plays; of his reception at the court in Dresden, and the intimacy he formed with Prince John of Saxony, to whom he was bound by an interest almost equal to that of the Prince, in "Dante;" and of his conversations with Neander, Humboldt, Ancillon, Savigny, Von Raumer, Retzsch, and other eminent Germans. Prince John's translation of "Dante" into German was subjected to



as severe a test as that of Longfellow's into English. Ticknor was present when Tieck read a part of Prince John's unpublished translation of the "Purgatorio;" and the scholars present were relentless in criticisms.

Mr. Ticknor was surprised at the popularity of his pastor, Dr. William Ellery Channing, in Europe. He found that such persons as Mrs. Somerville and Joanna Baillie considered him as the greatest living master of English prose; and Channing's little book on slavery, which was published while Ticknor was in Dresden, added immensely to his European reputation. The demand for his books exceeded the supply; and Baron Bülow brought to Ticknor a letter from the Duchess of Anhalt-Dessau, earnestly asking for aid in her desire to procure a complete copy of Channing's works. At Berlin he visited Neander, the historian of the Christian Church. After mounting three or four flights of stairs, he found Neander in his scholastic den, buried in books, dirty in his person, so near-sighted that he could not see an inch before his nose, so absorbed in his studies that "his practical knowledge was not much wider than his vision," but learned, earnest, kind, and conscientious. Alexander von Humboldt was the great personage at that time in Berlin; the favorite of the monarch and the idol of the multitude; talking freely on subjects which other courtiers carefully avoided; a liberal in politics, though the pensioner of a king; conversing equally well on all subjects with "incredible velocity, both in French and English," and unsparing in sarcasms on individ-

uals he deemed worthy of his contempt. Mr. Ticknor discovered that his *valet-de-place*; and the people of the inn where he lodged, thought more of him when they learned that he was a friend of Humboldt.

At Vienna, Mr. Ticknor easily made his way into the most exclusive society of that city,—into that select and sacred circle where no other American citizen, not an ambassador, had ever before been admitted. His account of his conversations with Prince Metternich bring into strong relief the prominent qualities of that statesman. Metternich in Austria, Nesselrode in Russia, Palmerston in England, might be classed together as politicians who simply adapted their theories and conduct to the condition of the countries they aspired to govern. None of them had any political faith apart from the system of government established in the nation of which he was the first minister. Palmerston, transplanted to St. Petersburg or Vienna, would have acted as Nesselrode acted in Russia, and as Metternich acted in Austria; if Nesselrode or Metternich had been transplanted to England, he would have exercised all his skill in an attempt to “manage” the House of Commons. All these statesmen were powerful, not on account of their fixed convictions in regard to any of the principles of government, but through the pliability of their minds in accommodating principles to the facts “of the situation.” Metternich seems to have talked frankly with Ticknor. “In your country,” he said, “democracy is a reality; in Europe it is a falsehood, and I

hate all falsehoods. . . . If I were a citizen of your country I should belong to the old conservative party, of which Washington was the head. . . . You have always managed your affairs with foreign nations with ability. . . . You will become more and more democratic; your system is one that wears out fast. I do not know where it will end, nor how it will end; but it cannot end in a quiet, ripe old age. . . . I do not like my business. The present state of Europe disgusts me. When I was five-and-twenty years old I foresaw nothing but change and trouble in my time; and I sometimes thought that I would leave Europe and go to America, or somewhere else; out of the reach of it. But my place was here. . . . And so I have gone on, and have been here at the head of affairs since 1809. . . . I labor for to-morrow. It is with to-morrow that my spirit wrestles, and I am but too happy if I can do something to prevent the evil it may threaten, or add something to the good of which it is capable." That dreadful "to-morrow" is indeed the phantom which all wise ministers of absolute monarchies have the most cause to dread! It is the immense advantage of constitutional governments that with them to-morrow is abundantly able to take care of itself.

It is to be said of Professor Ticknor, that, in all his interviews with potentates and prime ministers, he ever stood bravely up to his principles as a citizen of a republic. The Grand Duke of Tuscany having asked him in what country he thought it would be the great-

est good fortune for a man to be born, he instantly answered, "America;" and when called upon to give his reasons for such a preference, he somewhat bluntly replied that in the United States the mass of the community, "by being occupied about the affairs of state, instead of being confined, as they were elsewhere, to the mere drudgery of earning their own subsistence," were more truly men than the inhabitants of other countries, and therefore "it was more agreeable and elevating to live among them." The Duke "blushed a little, but made no answer."

Mr. Ticknor returned from Europe in the summer of 1838. His friends were among the first citizens of Boston; his literature and scholarship, generally acknowledged, were rendered more attractive by the zest he could communicate to a learned conversation by his reminiscences of distinguished European men of letters and scholars with whom he had been on familiar terms; and his ample means, his cultivated manners, and his possession of the best house, both as regards situation and elegance, which then existed in the city, made him a leader in the society of the place. His position was so assured that one of his friends, Nathan Hale, pleasantly suggested that the name of Boston be changed into Ticknorville. In New York and other cities the good society of Boston was for a long time regarded as the select circle of cultivated gentlemen and ladies in which Ticknor moved, and to which he almost gave the law. The mistake arose from an oversight of the fact that Boston has a



hundred "circles;" that nobody who has anything to say on any subject, whether he be an extreme conservative or an extreme radical in all matters relating to society, politics, and religion, can fail to find there a coterie "hospitable to his thought;" and that though the city is not comprehensive in the large sense of including in one society its best intellectual and moral forces, it is comprehensive in the minor sense of affording each division of these clashing forces a social stronghold of its own. The reader of these "Memoirs" will be a little surprised that such names as R. W. Emerson, John G. Whittier, Theodore Parker, Charles Sumner, not to mention others, are omitted in their pages; but then these men had inner social circles of their own. It was not to be supposed that Mr. Ticknor could, as a man of eminent respectability, have any sympathy with their audacities of thought and conduct; but we are disappointed that such persons as Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell should not have received the just praise, either in diary or letter, which is lavished by him on some European titled mediocrities. No notion can be obtained of the vital intellectual and moral movement going on in Boston and Massachusetts from 1838 to 1861, by studying Mr. Ticknor's letters. They indicate benevolent feeling, patriotic feeling, good sense; but show little insight, though an occasional glimpse of foresight. As a political thinker he was somewhat of an amateur, taking no active part in politics, but generally agreeing in opinion with such statesmen and jurists as Webster



and Curtis,—wise to the extent of being over-wise, thinking that political logic was an adequate offset to political passion, and underrating the force of the real elements of political power in the nation.

As a man of letters he was highly esteemed by his friends, and doubtless deserved their esteem ; but to chance visitors, though always courteous, the metallic sharpness of his voice seemed to be an affronting expression of the settled convictions of his mind. There is an amusing story told of a young man, who visited him for the first and last time, venturing modestly to suggest that the case of Laura Bridgman introduced some new problems in the philosophy of perception as expounded by recent metaphysicians, but who was stunned into silence by Mr. Ticknor's decisive answer, that " Mr. Locke's opinions had satisfied him on all matters of that kind." Socially, his judgments ever had something of this positiveness ; his intellect was not open to new ideas ; he excluded from his toleration what he had not included in his studies and experience ; and he sometimes weighed heavily on the Boston mind during the period he was supposed to have undertaken its direction. But his great work, " The History of Spanish Literature," was all this time in process of composition. He enjoyed during ten years, as Mackintosh enjoyed during nearly his whole life, all the glory of an expected work, before a page of it had been printed. He was known to be engaged on his self-elected task ; he had purchased, regardless of expense, the finest

library of Spanish literature possessed by any living man ; he had resided in Spain ; and he had conversed with every European and American celebrity interested in the history and literature of Spain. The result showed how conscientiously exact he had been in verifying every date, estimating the value of every authority, weighing the worth of opposing schools of criticism. He indeed produced such a masterpiece of patient and exhaustive research that one of his critics declared there were not six men in Europe capable of reviewing it, as far as the facts of Spanish literature were concerned. Its form and construction were also praised by such critics as Prescott and Motley, who complimented the author for the art displayed in dividing the subject into appropriate periods, and connecting the literature of Spain with its history. The style of the work is excellent of its kind, clear in statement, manly in tone, but somewhat hard and cold in its sustained elegance, and containing few of those felicities of phrase which are observable in the author's private diaries and correspondence.

It is curious that Hallam's letter to him — declaring that his work indicated a marvellous reach of knowledge in a foreigner, that it could not be superseded by any writer out of Spain, and could not, unless Spain became very different from what it was in 1850, be superseded by any writer in it — should have objected to Ticknor's too frequent use of the word "genial." The word might be offensively prominent, but certainly not the quality. If the historian of Spanish

Literature failed in anything, it was in not having a thoroughly "genial" appreciation of the peculiar character of the Spanish people and of the genius of its authors. His erudition was not accompanied with corresponding imaginative sympathy and insight; he never thoroughly, and with full heart and divining mind, put himself in the place of Lope de Vega, Cervantes, and Calderon; the secret of the genius of Spain eluded him while he was diligently studying every book which could shed the faintest light upon it. He could not, by any effort of imagination, cosily make himself a contemporary of the age he aimed to depict. The materials of his work were, after years of tireless research, lodged safely in his house in Park Street, Boston; but his verdicts on the great writers of Spain were unfortunately delivered from the same locality with a Bostonian's moral energy and emphasis. The wonder is that this greatest of Spanish scholars, outside of Spain, should have ignored or forgotten all he must have learned from such German students of Spanish literature as A. W. Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck. Incomparably superior to both of them, so far as regards an external knowledge of the literature of Spain, he was perhaps inferior to both in all that intuitive knowledge which comes from the power of perceiving, realizing, interpreting, vitalizing, and reproducing the spirit of a literary age, and the souls of the men who shed lustre on it. Wide as had been his experience of many lands and many peoples, he could not, like his friend Prescott, imaginatively expatriate himself, and

while writing on Spanish themes, become so far a Spaniard for the time as to detect, by sympathy, the inner, vital facts of the Spanish heart and imagination.

As a citizen of Boston Mr. Ticknor cheerfully took upon himself the duty of discharging all those unremunerated services, in the cause of education and benevolence, which the city exacts from its opulent and cultivated inhabitants. In Boston a man loses "caste" unless he submits to a tax on his time and property, entirely dissociated from the tax levied by the assessors. Benevolence there is one of the tests of respectability; and selfishness and avarice, pure and undefiled from any admixture of philanthropy, are considered not only inhuman, but unfashionable. Mr. Ticknor, though a member of many benevolent associations, was specially attracted by enterprises which were intended to advance art, literature, and science. The Boston Public Library — which is now the best public library on the American continent, and which promises to be one of the great libraries of the world — is indebted to him, as one of its original trustees, not only for his good judgment in selecting the higher class of works, but for making it so popular in the free distribution of books that no party which has ever obtained power in the civic government has dreamed, in its most economic plans for reducing expenses, of refusing to the trustees of the Public Library any money which they asked. The library, indeed, may be called the most popular institution in the city, though its demands for money now average

a hundred thousand dollars a year. The library was opened to the public in 1854, in a small schoolhouse in Mason Street, with a collection of twelve thousand volumes. The munificent donations of Mr. Bates, of the firm of Baring Brothers & Co., led to Mr. Ticknor's third visit to Europe in 1856. He was absent fifteen months, establishing agencies for the library, buying books, and aiding its interests in other respects. He was cordially welcomed by his old friends, and made some new acquaintances.

On his return from Europe Mr. Ticknor was for some years connected with the Public Library, and on the death of Mr. Everett in 1863 he was elected President of the Board of Trustees, and held the position for a year, when he resigned. Now, when the institution has outgrown in usefulness the most sanguine expectations of its founders, every citizen of Boston has reason to hold in respect the memory of George Ticknor, who did more than any other man to give it that popular character which insures its stability, and who left to it his magnificent library of Spanish books.

Shortly after his return from Europe he wrote a letter, full of good sense, to Mr. Justice Curtis, in which he gave his reasons for believing that a civil war in this country would please the governing powers in Europe. "In my judgment," he says, "whenver the fatal hour that strikes the dissolution of our Union comes, *those who stand by it longest will have the least sympathy in Europe.*" He thus predicted



what, to the amazement of many American gentlemen who were great lovers of England, actually occurred when the Rebellion burst forth. The surprise was so great that old Federalists, old Democrats, Antislavery men who had been accustomed to count on the sympathy of their friends in Great Britain, were united as one man in their indignation against the governing classes of England, whether liberal or illiberal. In the eastern, middle, and northwestern States, it may be safely said that there were few cultivated or uncultivated men who did not feel a rage against "the mother-country," fiercer than that which was felt in 1776 or 1812. Fortunately for the peace of both nations, the American mind in such matters is ungifted with the faculty of memory; and after the first explosion of righteous wrath was over, the enmity gradually subsided.

During the four years preceding the Rebellion, Mr. Ticknor was recognized as a supporter of the measures of compromise designed to avert it; after it had broken out, and during its continuance, he belonged to that class of conservatives who opposed almost all the daring "war measures" by which the Confederacy was eventually overthrown; and while warmly sympathizing with the cause of the nation and giving freely of his means to sustain it, his mind was so oppressed by the technicalities of constitutional law, that he wished the war to be conducted on principles which would probably have insured the triumph of the Rebels, had they been carried out.

Mr. Jefferson Davis, in arms against the Union and the Constitution, and reviling the "Yankees" as the scum of the earth, was specially disgusted at the impudence of the Northerners in their so-called violation of the Constitution of the United States. Many intelligent and patriotic men of the North objected, on constitutional grounds, to the measures which Mr. Davis specially dreaded.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ticknor was engaged in a biography of Prescott the historian, who had died in January, 1859. The volume, carefully and lovingly written, was published in 1864, when the writer had reached the age of seventy-two. For forty years the biographer and the subject of the biography had been united in the closest bonds of friendship. The "Life of Prescott" attained an immediate popularity, and it still holds its place among the most delightful of literary biographies.

Mr. Ticknor survived the war, and all the measures of reconstruction which followed the termination of the war, preserving to the last his interest in public affairs. His life-long labor, his beloved "History of Spanish Literature," was ever on his table for corrections, alterations, omissions, or additions. His physical health was always remarkably good; and when in January, 1871, he died, his death seemed the result of mere bodily decay, as his mind was clear to the last. Without pain he quietly withdrew from the world, having enjoyed in it every satisfaction the world could give.

It only remains to be said, that the letters and journals of Mr. Ticknor are of so interesting a character, and introduce the reader to so many men and women distinguished by rank, fashion, learning, and genius, without requiring him to move from his own fireside, that they cannot but obtain a wide and permanent popularity. As a biography, the work is open to the criticism that Mr. Ticknor, as he was, is almost submerged in his copious accounts of the celebrated people he knew. Though recognized in his native city as quite a formidable personage in himself, we continually lose sight of him in the still more formidable personages whom it was his good fortune to meet.

## MATTHEW ARNOLD.

It may be affirmed that those American readers of the works of Matthew Arnold who have diligently followed him from his first to his latest volume, who have most keenly felt the fascination of his style and the limitations of his character, and who have scribbled over the margins of his pages with alternate notes of admiration and interrogation, will specially welcome the new edition of his writings published by the Macmillans. In an extended consideration of his labors much might be said in his praise which the necessary brevity of this review compels us to omit; and our simple object is to state some reasons which account for the fact that he is not popular, in any large sense of the word, either on this or the other side of the Atlantic.

It is doubtless to be supposed that Mr. Arnold's estimate of our civilization will not be flattering to our national vanity or national pride. A writer who has repeatedly told his own countrymen that their higher classes are "materialized," their middle classes "vulgarized," and their lower classes "brutalized," cannot be expected to proclaim, after a few months' residence in this country, that the conduct, politics,

society, science, and literature of the United States come up to the high ideal standards which he is accustomed to apply to other nations as well as to his own.

It may be said that the general characteristic of Mr. Arnold's poetry is moral and intellectual scepticism and despondency; and that the general characteristic of his criticism is moral and intellectual superciliousness. When he writes in verse from his inner self, from his "heart of heart," he moans; when he writes in prose he is prone to assume the air of "a superior being," condescending even to those he graciously applauds. When a man, in the expressive phrase of Dickens's Mr. Wegg, "drops into poetry," it is supposed that some kindling sentiment prompts him to choose verse as the most appropriate vehicle for his outburst of thought and emotion. In Mr. Arnold's case this process is reversed. When he is out of spirits, he sings; when he feels himself a being superior to his contemporaries, he criticises. In his mood of dejection he embodies his feeling in a stanza like this, taken from his poem on "The Grand Chartreuse:" —

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride;  
I come to shed them at their side."

Also, when in a milder mood, but one which is still haunted by spectres of a melancholy that seems



inborn, and to lie at the very root of his nature, he declares,—

“Too fast we live, too much are tried,  
Too harassed to attain  
Wordsworth’s sweet calm, or Goethe’s wide  
And luminous view to gain.”

It may be said that Mr. Arnold’s sorrowful view of life in his poems is characteristic of many great poets. Byron, for example, is fiercely misanthropic in matters of human concern, where Mr. Arnold is merely gently despondent and despairing. But Byron’s original, not to say aboriginal, energy of nature is so great; that, while his thoughts tend to depress the soul, his energy stimulates it. We get from his poems few principles on which a rational human being would think of basing his conduct; but he inspires, impels, inflames hundreds of thousands of readers who have no sympathy with his misanthropy. Mr. Arnold goes deeper, perhaps, than Byron into the causes which induce many thinkers to be dejected in surveying the phenomena of human life, but he lacks Byron’s immense vigor. A comparative feebleness of constitution prevents him from giving to his thoughts the great element of power. This is said without questioning the exquisiteness of much of his poetry, and the delight it communicates to many cultivated minds; but its effectiveness on ordinary readers is injured by the general melancholy of its tone, and by its lack of impassioned imagination.

One cannot speak of Matthew Arnold without thinking of his father, whose biography by the late Dean Stanley made, at the period when it was published, so deep an impression. It stimulated the reader to carry liberal and generous ideas into practical work for the good of mankind. The father had the great quality of soul. Everybody felt that he announced no principle for which he would not willingly have died. In fact, he was recognized as a spiritual force; and he communicated spiritual life because he was himself all alive. It can hardly be doubted that the scholarship of the son is far richer and larger than that of the father; that in theology he has advanced to conclusions from which the father would have recoiled; that he has successfully occupied regions of literature which the father barely entered; and that even in matters of education, especially the education of the middle classes, the son is far beyond the father in clear ideas and methods of culture; yet the son, with all his intelligence and acquired knowledge, has not the father's magical gift. He can inform, but he cannot inspire and invigorate: the soul is wanting. That wonderful passage of experience and intelligence into will, by which high reason, or even ordinary good sense, impels reasonable minds to instant action, is lacking in the most radical of Matthew Arnold's teachings and preachings. We agree or disagree with him, as we read; but if we agree, we receive from him no impulse to conform our conduct to his ideas. It would be difficult to detect

among those who most admire his writings a single individual who has been led to act nobly by any inspiration derived directly from his numerous books. And yet most of these books are specially marked by the emphasis laid on righteousness, and on self-renunciation as the fruit of righteousness.

The explanation of this fact is not far to seek. The expansion of his intelligence has been purchased at the expense of weakening his will. It cannot be said that he is destitute of the peculiarities and infirmities of individuality, however much he may be lacking in its powers; for no modern writer of equal reputation and genius is so full of idiosyncrasies and tastes and distastes, especially the latter. But the heart of his being is not thoroughly sound and strong. Something languid, discontented, dissatisfied,—something which makes the impression of a certain subtle, feline resentment at the non-acknowledgment of his own claims to eminence,—is observable in the inmost recesses of his moral nature. A compassionate contempt for other minds appears to be a necessary condition of any self-satisfaction he may find in contemplating his own. This ungracious quality too often takes the form of a condescension, which exasperates alike those who agree and those who disagree with him in matters of literary, political, and theological discussion. Now, the Almighty may very properly condescend to the human beings he has created; but he is the only being who has a right to condescend,—except, it seems, Mr. Matthew Arnold; and the latter

uses the privilege at times in a fashion which makes us regret that the exception was made in his favor. It may be affirmed that you may do all in your power to injure a fellow-creature, even if you go to the extent of robbing, torturing, and enslaving him; he may sullenly bear these injuries,—but beware of condescending to him! No man can descend so low as not acutely to feel this last insult to what is immortal in him,—his personality.

It is difficult to illustrate Mr. Arnold's superb superciliousness except by examples drawn from that department of life where superciliousness reigns supreme,—namely, fashionable society. Thus it is reported that two high-bred women,—one from New York, the other from Boston,—happened to meet in what is ironically called a "social" circle. Both were rich and accomplished, and both claimed to have ancestors. Boston, in the course of a little conversation between the two, alluded, in the most seemingly unpretentious way, to the trivial circumstance that her ancestors came over in the "Mayflower." "Ah!" replied New York, with a little lift of her eyebrows expressive of innocent surprise, "I did not know before that the 'Mayflower' brought over any steerage passengers."

"And the imperial Yorkist passéd on,  
In matron meditation, Boston free."

The retort certainly was not delicate; but still in what Bacon calls the "great ship of Time" no one is

so careful to distinguish between cabin and steerage passengers as Mr. Arnold. His exacting taste demands the "culture" of the few highly educated people who occupy the state-rooms, though genius and saintliness may be among the motley assemblage in the steerage. The slightest taint of vulgarity repels him, as though it were an inexpressible sin. All his readers must remember his mischievous delight in quoting, in essay after essay, a verse of a hymn, which he eventually robs of the capital letter beginning each line, and which he declares expresses the average piety of a Protestant devotee of the middle class: —

" My Jesus to know, and feel his blood flow,  
'Tis life everlasting, 't is Heaven below."

Now, that such doggerel as this is exceptional in all Orthodox Congregational hymn-books he must know very well; but it serves his turn in his effort to show the vulgarity which steals into the worship of dissenting Christians. He is never tired of thrusting it into their faces as a proof that they cannot adore their Redeemer without shocking every principle of good taste, and of ironically recommending to them a small dose of "literature" to sweeten and refine the bald announcement of their "dogma." If uneducated or imperfectly educated Protestant saints ever swear, it must be when they read such polite exhortations for them to sing and pray in Oxford English; and they might be justified in swearing by assuming



that, considering the provocation, profanity in some emergencies becomes a religious exercise.

No injustice is done to Mr. Arnold in saying that condescension in the form of superciliousness more or less infects his ablest writings. He is very careful to abstain from every kind of that passionate invective, of that righteous wrath, in which vehement minds are apt to indulge when their souls are excited by the contemplation of some great wrong; there is hardly a trace in his works of the noble rage so dominant in Milton, Chatham, or Burke; but, on the other hand, there is no recent English writer who excels or even equals him in the exquisitely polished poison with which he deliberately tips the light and shining arrows of his sarcasm. The wounds he inflicts may seem to be a mere scratch on the surface; but they fester, they eat into the flesh, which they hardly seem to touch; and the dull and prolonged pain they cause is as hard to bear as the sting of a scorpion or the bite of a centipede. It is said that curates of the Church of England have a not unnatural desire to become bishops; but what curates would not rather prefer to remain curates than to occupy the positions of the Bishops of Winchester and Gloucester, after they had been subjected to Matthew Arnold's ironical compliments in "Literature and Dogma"? These dignitaries of the Church had, in Convocation, declared their intention "to do something for the honor of Our Lord's Godhead," and to mark their sense of that "infinite separation for time and eternity which is

involved in rejecting the Godhead of the Eternal Son." Throughout the volume, Arnold seizes every opportunity to bring in that unfortunate phrase, "to do something," until the poor bishops are practically stretched on the rack of an intellectual inquisition which is as cruel as the old Spanish model of bodily torment. How studiously polite, how affectedly urbane, how inexpressibly bland, is the manner of the critic as he sees his victims writhe under the application of his gilded thumb-screws. The first turn and twist of the engines of torture might not inflict much pain; but it is their continual repetition which wounds. The poor creatures, when he makes a point against their special dogma, are, as it were, compassionately urged "to do something" for "the Godhead of the Eternal Son." Their pious anxiety to begin a work which, it would appear, they have long neglected, and their confidence in their power "to do something" when their sacerdotal functions are properly exercised, are pressed home on the bishops with a witty relentlessness that borders on malice; while at the same time the critic is employed in an attempt to undermine their whole system of theology, and does all he can to make them ridiculous in the eyes of the world. It is hardly possible to inflict acute pain in a more seemingly gentle way. And then, throughout the discussion, the reader who reads between the lines is aware that substantial injustice is done to the bishops. He may take pleasure in seeing how a master in the rhetorical art can, to all appearance, be victorious

over able adversaries by insisting on holding them to an unlucky phrase which has slipped from them in an unguarded moment; yet the victory is still not one of reason, but of wit. At least, it has none of the "sweet reasonableness" which it is the object of the book to enforce.

A critic who does not hesitate to satirize men high in the Established Church, as well as persons low in dissenting congregations, can hardly be expected to deal genially with contemporary men of letters. When he is "down among the dead men," he is sufficiently complimentary; but how few living authors are indebted to him for a friendly word! His essays "On Translating Homer" provoked combats nearly as fierce as those the great epic poet celebrates. He contrived to excite the enmity of living translators of Homer by his exasperating superciliousness in summing up their demerits. Homer, says Mr. Arnold, has four distinctive qualities, which his translator should keep constantly in mind, or he will fail in rendering him adequately. Homer is, first, eminently rapid; secondly, he is eminently plain and direct, both in the evolution of his thought and in the expression of it; thirdly, he is eminently plain and direct in the substance of his thought,—that is, in his matter and ideas; and, finally, he is eminently noble. From Chapman to Wright, every translator is found to be deficient in one or more of these inexorable conditions. Living translators of Homer were specially angry at the cool way in which Mr. Arnold applied

his tests, and among them all none was more enraged than F. W. Newman. He could not endure the pitying but penetrating force of Arnold's criticism, or the imperturbable calm of his manner of stating it. Inveective the good man might have borne with fortitude; but that this comparative stripling in Greek literature should assume toward such a veteran as himself the air of a superior being, was too much for his philosophy. He was angry, and, what is more indiscreet, he showed that he was angry; and this gave his antagonist an opportunity to overwhelm him anew with his bland and sedate condescension. Other translators had their own wrongs to avenge, and an exciting controversy was the result, in which nobody kept his temper except the person who had caused the disturbance. In one of the chapters "On Translating Homer" Mr. Arnold quotes a passage from Goethe, which must be new even to many scholars who pride themselves on their familiarity with the writings of the great German. "From Homer and Polygnotus," says Goethe, "I every day learn more and more clearly that in our life here above-ground we have, properly speaking, to enact Hell." That Matthew Arnold had learned the same lesson from Homer and Polygnotus must have been the settled conviction of most of the translators he offended.

But then the keen critic had laid himself open to criticism. He illustrated his own principles of translation by rendering into English hexameters a passage or two from the Iliad. His critics made themselves

merry over his versions, or perversions, of the original. He watched warily for an opportunity to retort, and he found it in the preface to his "Essays in Criticism." Speaking of himself as a Professor, he modestly states that he is shy of claiming the title, because he shares it with so many quacks and jugglers, like Professor Pepper, Professor Anderson, and the like. He cannot, he says, compete, merely as Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford, with such shining lights as these. "I," he adds, "have my humble place in a hierarchy whose seat is on earth; and I serve under an illustrious Chancellor who translates Homer, and who calls his Professor's leaning toward hexameters 'a pestilent heresy.' Nevertheless, that cannot keep me from admiring the performance of my severe chief. I admire its freshness, its manliness, its simplicity; although, perhaps, if one looks for the charm of Homer, for his play of divine light, Professor Pepper must go on, I cannot." The cool insolence of this deadly thrust is incomparably good, considered as satire. The Earl of Derby had sneered at Arnold's hexameters, and had translated Homer. Arnold patronizes his chief by admitting the merits of his version; but he indicates, in a light, fltering way, that in translating the first of the great poets of the world he has made only one slight mistake,—the mistake of leaving out all the poetry. The truth of the criticism only made it the more exasperating. The allusion to Professor Pepper at the end must have stung the arrogant Earl to the quick. At any



rate, he was careful, we think, to indulge in no more flings at his Professor's hexameters.

But a more provoking form of Mr. Arnold's fine scorn of what shocks his fastidious taste or offends his cherished opinions is his habit of adopting a mode of attack which he disclaims so far as he is himself concerned, but which is most in vogue among those writers who sympathize with his adversary's method of conducting the warfare of words. Thus, Charles Sumner never used profane language as a proper expression of his own angry feelings; but he had no objection to quoting the profanity of brother Senators, whose passions had been aroused by his opposition to their opinions. Readers of Wordsworth, when they come upon the first portion of one of his humane maxims, must have wondered how he could escape falling into the fault he palpably condemned. The passage begins thus:—

“He who feels contempt  
For any living thing —”

How, the reader asks, can the poet avoid expressing something like contempt for the person who is supposed to experience it? But Wordsworth glides over the difficulty with perfect ease, as is seen by his conclusion:—

“He who feels contempt  
For any living thing, *has faculties*  
*Which he has never used.*”

In a similar way, though for a different and less humane purpose, Mr. Arnold expresses his dislike of

the style of Mr. Kinglake, as shown in the latter's brilliant history of "The Invasion of the Crimea." He calls it "the Corinthian style," detests it utterly, as having "the glitter of the East with the hardness of the West;" and ends by quoting an unfavorable criticism of it by somebody whom he styles "a brother Corinthian," and who had, it seems, declared that Mr. Kinglake combined "the passion for tinsel of a sensuous Jew with the savage spleen of a dyspeptic Englishman." But Mr. Arnold hastens to add: "I do not say this of Mr. Kinglake's style; I am very far from saying it. To say it, is to fall into just that hard, brassy, overstretched style which Mr. Kinglake himself employs so far too much, and which I, for my part, reprobate. But when a brother Corinthian of Mr. Kinglake says it, I feel what he means." When Mr. Kinglake read this criticism, must he not have felt that the "brother Corinthian" who made the somewhat brutal assault on his manner of writing was far more merciful than the fastidious critic who quoted it?

It would be needless to select other passages from Mr. Arnold's books in proof that his taste is so refined that he finds little to commend in his contemporaries. Bishop Colenso is the favorite "Pontiff of the Philistines;" Macaulay is "the Apostle of the Philistines," and his Roman Ballads "pinchbeck." He is not daunted even by such despots as Ruskin and Carlyle, but draws a marked line of distinction between their genius and intelligence. Their deficiency in the latter quality seems to grieve him much.

Thackeray and George Eliot he does not even mention; and of Dickens he said nothing good during the great romancer's life, classing "Little Dorrit" among Magnall's Questions, Joyce's Scientific Dialogues, and Beecher's Sermons in his catalogue of the library of an average British Philistine. After Dickens's death, for a purpose of his own, he quoted and praised those portions of "David Copperfield" which contained a satire on middle-class religion and middle-class education. It was said of a lawyer, eminent for his learning and his ability, and the singular absence of passion in his arguments, that he could not speak fifteen minutes before a jury without running the risk of not only losing his case, but of making every man of the twelve his personal enemy. The secret of his unpopularity was that he spoke down to court and jury from an inaccessible height of wisdom which they could not hope to reach, but from which he for the time descended, in such a way as to give them the impression that he *condescended*. "Some men," said Mr. Choate, "we dislike for cause; others, peremptorily." He must have meant by the latter the men who condescend.

It is to be feared that we have apparently undervalued the real power and influence of Mr. Arnold in thus frankly stating certain defects and limitations in his character which have not been without their effect in giving an undue bias to his intellect. There is a class of educated readers in England and the United States who, not being writers, are delighted with

criticisms which are really funeral services over the souls of would-be writers who fail to come up to ideal standards of excellence. How many men and women, who might eventually have become good writers, are killed at the start by harsh judgments, it is hard to determine. Byron expresses his astonishment at the success of such critical homicides. He says, —

“Strange that the soul, that very fiery particle,  
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.”

But it is often snuffed out, to the great satisfaction of the class of readers we have referred to, who would probably meet a similar fate if they ventured to appear in print. Their discretion is rewarded by the tranquil enjoyment they experience in witnessing the death-bed agonies of their more ambitious friends and neighbors, who, conquering the natural fear which the austere critics are so calculated to excite, have ignominiously fallen in their desperate attempt to rise. This class of readers, who have generally “gone through college” without having college go through them, are prone to pride themselves on their culture, and resent the most diffident criticisms regarding the perfection of their idol, Matthew Arnold, whom they look up to as the apostle of culture. Now, the importance of culture cannot be overstated; but as has been pleasantly remarked, the maxim is in danger of being so perverted as to end practically “in the culture of self-importance.” This hateful perversion of the true creed is observable in the behavior of literary

fops and coxcombs who imitate the master, as other fops and coxcombs vainly try to imitate, in the intercourse of society, the self-centred, refined insolence of manner and irreproachable costume of the acknowledged leaders of fashion. Mr. Arnold is as immeasurably beyond such affectations in literature as he is in dress. It seems cruel to make him in the least degree responsible for a shallow superciliousness of tone in polite literary circles, which a few sentences in his writings may still have had some influence in producing. His leading maxim is that "conduct," the cultivation of righteousness, properly occupies three-fourths of human life; "culture" is the remaining fraction; and he emphasizes this because he believes that it has been unduly disregarded, and is, moreover, absolutely necessary for the right regulation of conduct. What may be called his vital superciliousness is a quality which has its roots deep down in his intellectual and moral character, and though a serious defect, is entirely different from the sham substitute, which consists in despising what one cannot emulate, and in sneering at well-intended efforts for excellence which one has never had the nerve even to attempt.

If we examine carefully the earlier prose essays of Mr. Arnold, we shall find that his method of assailing English Philistinism was by a sudden, a violent change of the point of view in his way of looking at things specially repugnant to the English mind. In his dissertations on "The Function of Criticism



at the Present Time," and "The Literary Influence of Academies," he opened a lively campaign at everything insular and provincial in English habits of thought, and showed no toleration for what he considered the brag and bluster of English political and literary conceit. He was necessarily one-sided; but he made narrowness an agent to promote comprehensiveness. Desiring to get the English mind "out of its ruts," he urged English thinkers to include in their confident generalizations a number of facts and ideas which they had hitherto excluded; and these neglected facts and ideas he exaggerated out of their true relations, in order to force them on public attention. He lacked, as we have said, the kindling, magnetic power which springs from original energy of nature; but he possessed, in a striking degree, the minor quality of suggestiveness. He had light in abundance, though he was wanting in the heat which ordinarily accompanies light. His suggestiveness made him command the attention of many thinkers who, like Emerson, believe that the best benefit we receive from other minds is not so much instruction as "provocation."

In his essay on the "Function of Criticism," Mr. Arnold takes the ground that the critic, earnest to acquire the best that is thought and known in the world and to see all things as they really are, should avoid direct contact with practical life, and decline to apply his advanced ideas to existing facts. Reformers naturally resented the principle thus confidently announced, because they knew by experience that it was

impossible to prevent ideas from coming into conflict with current abuses in Church and State. Thus M. Renan said, in substance, to the Emperor Napoleon the Third: "Allow us thinkers and scholars to think and investigate freely, and communicate the results of our thinking and research to the few other scholars who care for the things of the mind, and we will not object, with our impertinent opposition, to anything you may do with the uneducated and prejudiced millions of France. We do not address them at all." Well, the eventual result was Renan's "Life of Jesus," which became such an element of disturbance in the whole Imperial system of government, that any alcove in a large public library might be packed full of books and pamphlets which this truly incendiary volume called forth from all classes of the French population, clerical and political. Mr. Arnold, as an Englishman, could not expect to rival M. Renan in creating a similar outburst of the public mind by such a volume as "Saint Paul and Protestantism," or "Literature and Dogma;" but everything that could be done by the audacities of theological thinking, aimed directly at the cherished tenets of all English churches and sects that pretended to orthodoxy, was done by Mr. Arnold in these two heretical books. He fondly thought, like Renan, that he could keep at a distance from the smoke and dust of a combat that his own writings tended to provoke. Such men may flatter themselves that they are addressing thinkers alone, when they are really rousing mobs. One is reminded

of the intelligent contraband who during our Civil War entertained an audience in Dedham, Massachusetts, with an account of a furious conflict of Federals and Rebels on the banks of the Potomac. "But," asked a critical auditor of his flaming narrative, "where were you when the battle was raging?" "Oh! I was back among the baggage." "But how far were you from the bullets and the cannon-balls?" "Well," was the instant reply, "not so far as Dedham!" Probably the critic was a thoughtful Abolitionist, who, discontented with the avowed objects of the war, concluded to stay at home until Emancipation was proclaimed; but he doubtless was soon swept into the crowd of volunteers, conscripts, colonels, and brigadier-generals that reinforced the Army of the Potomac. He had, like Renan and Arnold, intended to judge dispassionately of battles from a discreet and distant point of view, but was whirled into the midst of the contest by a fate he could not withstand.

The prose of Mr. Arnold, when he is in his best mood, almost realizes his ideal of what he calls the Attic style, having its "warm glow, blithe movement, and soft pliancy of life." Take such an essay as that on "Religious Sentiment," and it seems, as we read, that it cannot be improved. In some of his theological and political discussions his style, it must be confessed, loses much of its charm. It is important, however, to discriminate between listening to Mr. Arnold and reading him. It is well known that some of the ablest

Englishmen scandalously neglect the elementary rules of elocution. In the United States almost every person, from the farmer who speaks in a town-meeting to the accomplished orator who addresses the Senate of the country, considers that the second part of his sentence should be as audible as the first. So far as we have heard eminent English speakers who have addressed American audiences, we have been surprised at the difference between the effect produced by what they speak and the effect produced by what they write. In Mr. Arnold's case, we remember a singular illustration of this general fact. One of his masterpieces of compact criticism is certainly his lecture on Heine. An accomplished professor of literature in one of our best colleges heard it delivered at Oxford, and came home fully impressed with the belief that Mr. Arnold was an overrated man. When published as an article in a magazine it attracted the notice of Mr. Emerson, who was vehement in its praise, and asked every person he met why there were no such critics in America. Even Carlyle heard of it, and had to read it. He was of course enraged, for he was accused of mistaking the main current of German literature after Goethe. "Have you heard," he growled to an American friend, "of poor Matt Arnold? What creature do you think he has selected as the writer who has continued, since Goethe, the main current of German literature? Why it is that PIG, Heine!"

In coming to the consideration of Mr. Arnold's theological writings, one is impressed, and sometimes

oppressed, by his theological learning and his skill in coolly reversing all the standards of popular belief; but he has not the first qualification of a religious reformer on a large scale, for though a keen and well-equipped critic of theological dogmas, he is not a man of religious genius. The exaltation of soul, the fervor, the rapture, the ecstasy of those great natures who have vitally experienced new views of religion, and verified them by the facts of their own consciousness, are entirely absent from his cool statements of revolutionary opinions. Paul's Epistles are considered the bulwarks of orthodoxy; but Mr. Arnold attempts to prove that the doctrines derived from them are gross misinterpretations of the Apostle's meaning. In "Literature and Dogma" he defends the strange hypothesis that the God revealed in the Old Testament is not a personal God, but only the "Eternal, not ourselves, that [and not *who*] makes for righteousness." The almost endless succession of texts he quotes in order to sustain his view of Israel's God as an eternal It, is calculated to make Jew and Christian alike tired of the very name of Righteousness. The old Puritans called good works not the offspring of Divine Grace the "rag of righteousness." One thinks, in reading the book, of the honest Hibernian, who in celebrating the superiority of the United States to Great Britain as a residence for a workingman, told exultingly to a fellow-countryman that when he first came over to this blessed land he had n't a rag to his back, and now, he exclaimed, "I'm kivered with 'em!" Certainly the



readers of "Literature and Dogma" must feel that at the end they are covered with "the rags of righteousness." The special point he makes is that the language of the Bible is "fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed, and scientific;" and this, the first step toward a right understanding of the Bible, demands culture in the person who takes it. By the application of this principle he gives a new interpretation to the texts on which the doctrines of all orthodox churches and sects are based; and his interpretation, if accepted, demolishes the doctrines. As long ago as 1838 Mr. Emerson, in his celebrated address to the Cambridge divinity students, announced Mr. Arnold's leading idea with more condensed vigor, in speaking of the theological misinterpretations of the words of Jesus. "The idioms of his language," he said, "and the figures of his rhetoric have usurped the place of his truth; and churches are not built on his principles, but on his tropes." The remarkable thing to be noted in Mr. Arnold's work is the confidence he seems to have that his method of viewing the Bible will draw unbelievers, especially such unbelievers as find edification in Mr. Bradlaugh's teachings, to a rational study of the Scriptures; but in fact "Literature and Dogma" is a volume which believers, unbelievers, misbelievers, and make-believers would unite in neglecting or condemning. It might be supposed that the author would say a word to conciliate the Unitarians; but he seemed to dread contact with them, alluding to them only to warn them from the indul-

gence of any complacency they might feel in hoping that he was coming over to their side,—forgetting that this denomination possessed, in James Martineau, one of the foremost theological scholars and thinkers of our day, and one who, in respect to mere “culture,” had a right to be ranked among the best writers of the age. Thus excluding sympathy from all quarters, subtly insulting all liberals and illiberals in turn, Mr. Arnold’s “Literature and Dogma,” full of bright and penetrating thought as it is, and thronging with felicities of diction that make the ordinary rhetorician survey it with “admiring despair,” ended in convincing only one person of the infallibility of its interpretation of the Bible. It is needless to add that the person thus convinced was the author. And this result might lead many crabbed orthodox divines to reverse his definition of God as the “Eternal, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness,” so as to make it read: “The temporal, not ourselves, who makes for Matthew Arnold’s revelation of the true meaning of the Scriptures.”

If space permitted, we should like to enumerate some of the positive additions made by Mr. Arnold to the language of literary criticism. No writer of our generation has been more prolific in devising felicitous phrases, distinctions, and definitions, which have easily passed into circulation as representatives of facts in our intellectual and moral constitution, and which hardly lose their freshness and force even when he persistently repeats them in essay after essay

They embody in pointed expression the delicacy and the depth of his perceptions. They often have the fatal certainty of those insights which reward the steady gaze of a spiritual observer of spiritual facts. They are specially prominent in his literary papers, and one would readily exchange hundreds of pages which he has devoted to theology and politics for a series of articles that would include a more extended consideration of the men of genius incidentally referred to in his books, such as Sophocles, Plato, Dante, Lucretius, Montaigne, Bossuet, Voltaire, Goethe, Spenser, Keats, not to mention others. In the present inadequate notice of him, we feel that we have been led unconsciously into placing too much emphasis on some of his peculiarities, which are calculated to provoke, if not to exasperate, many readers who are none the less charmed by the exquisite beauty of his style; by the graceful ease with which he commands at will all the resources of his large learning; by the inflexible honesty and independence of spirit which marks his partial and sometimes prejudiced judgments of men and things; and by the expansiveness, the fertility, the subtlety of his intellect, when his intellect has fair play, and is not controlled by obvious faults in his disposition and intellectual character.

## BARRY CORNWALL AND SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

BRYAN WALLER PROCTER<sup>1</sup> occupies a prominent place among poets of the second class, in a generation signalized by the appearance of such imaginative minds of the first class as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Scott, Shelley, and Keats. In the early part of the nineteenth century there was in Great Britain a revival of letters, such as the nation had not witnessed since the grand Elizabethan period of its literary history. Inspiration was in the very air of the time; and sensitive hearts and intellects inhaled it in the mere unconscious effort of breathing. The stimulus of this new atmosphere was specially felt in its quickening effect on the imagination and the passions. In the age of Dryden and Pope, the poet made his mark by the condensation and point of the heroic couplets in which he embodied his practical thinking; in the new age inaugurated by Wordsworth, the poet

<sup>1</sup> Bryan Waller Procter (Barry Cornwall). *An Autobiographical Fragment and Biographical Notes, with Personal Sketches of Contemporaries, Unpublished Lyrics, and Letters of Literary Friends.* Boston: Roberts Brothers.

*Barry Cornwall and Some of his Friends.* By James T. Fields. Boston: J. R. Osgood & Co.

penetrated below the maxims of practical thinking into the profounder region of ideal thought.

The mistake committed by most of the followers and imitators of Pope was due to their fond delusion that they became poets simply by exercising an acquired knack of putting the commonplaces of common-sense into smooth ten-syllabled verses. Their utter sterility, both of thought and of the results of logical thinking, invited and provoked the reaction against the whole poetic system of which Pope was the head. Persons whom he would hardly have condescended to admit into the "Dunciad," came to be at last the only representatives of his school. But it was found that the revolution which violently overturned the old dynasty furnished dunces and charlatans with new temptations, motives, and opportunities to hide their poverty of thought and incapacity for thinking under a skilful mimicry of Wordsworth's thoughtfulness and Byron's passion. They indulged to their heart's content, or rather to their tongue's content, in wild outbursts of senseless sensibility, expressed in a throng of irrelevant metaphors and images which represented nothing, which illustrated nothing, and which were accordingly good for nothing. Wordsworth's theory of the intimate, mysterious connection of the soul of man with the soul indwelling in visible Nature was almost as much a discovery in the realm of poetry as Newton's demonstration of the law of gravitation was a discovery in the realm of science. As expressed in his lines on revisiting the ruins of Tintern Abbey,



and in his immortal Ode on Immortality, it gave the key-note to the poetry of the century. Talfourd was justified in his assertion that Wordsworth was both "ridiculed and pillaged" by Byron; for the stanzas in the third canto of "*Childe Harold*" which are specially elemental in thought and feeling, penetrating as they do into the very soul of Nature, are merely the translation of Wordsworth's mysticism into *Byronese*. But Byron popularized the original thought of Wordsworth by giving it the stamp of his own individuality, and infusing into it the heat of his own passion. He made it infectious in making it his own. The effect of the establishment and domestication of this transcendental element in the poetry of the period was to relieve vagueness of thought and expression from its old stigma of being identical with vacuity of mind. The finest passages of Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley might be called vague, because they demanded a certain subtlety of perception in the reader to be appreciated at their full worth; the vagueness, in their case, was the result of exceptional depth and delicacy of thought and feeling. But the new school of poets supplied no critical tests by which mediocrity might be instantly distinguished from excellence; for obscurity of expression was no longer the one unpardonable sin of rhetoric, and three quarters of the readers of Wordsworth, nine tenths of the readers of Shelley, and at least a half of the readers of Byron did not comprehend — they were content merely to feel — the noblest and most original ideas concerning Nature

which were announced in their writings as divinations of the soul working under the impulse of impassioned imagination. There was therefore a vast opportunity presented for second-rate, third-rate, and fifth-rate poetasters to puzzle, distract, and dazzle a public which had come to consider vagueness and obscurity as perfectly consistent with a high order of genius, and which had not acquired the power of discriminating between the transcendentalists, who really transcended ordinary minds by superior gifts of insight, and impudent pretenders to transcendentalism, who were unintelligible merely because they had no definite idea of anything, no real passion for anything, and no capacity to express anything.

On the other side, there was one admirable and settled principle taught to the rhymers brought up in the school of Pope, — that their littleness, whether of brain or character, was inevitably revealed in adopting his form of versification and in submitting to his poetic laws. The austere requirements which he exacted of all persons who aspired to be poets after his model, were vigor of thinking and vigor in expressing the results of thinking; and he placed a special emphasis on clearness of thought and expression. The pretenders who seemingly adhered to his somewhat pedantic rules were instantly detected by their lack of his terseness and brightness, of his graceful fancy and strong good sense, of his incisive reasoning and epigrammatic point. Young's series of seven satires on the Universal Passion prove that an able man, writ-

ing under the limitations of what is called the school of Dryden and Pope, finds in them nothing which obstructs the action of a fertile, original, and energetic mind. Even Cowper in his satires submits to the autocracy of Pope without losing any of that originality of mind and character which made him the fit precursor of Wordsworth in writings worthier of his genius. Churchill found the heroic couplet an efficient medium of communication with the public, allowing free and full vent to all the ferocity and brutality of his nature, as well as to the coarse strong vein of sense, wit, humor, and sentiment which was inseparably associated with his ferocity and brutality. But the vast majority of the followers of Pope were a feeble folk, perhaps best represented, in the dying out of his system and method, by William Hayley, who was as a man kindly and well meaning, and who was as a poet the perfection of amiable imbecility. Still, he, no less than the other small poets of the school he represented, was compelled to be clear in thought as well as "correct" in versification; and his lucidity, therefore, only made his mediocrity more glaringly and distressingly conspicuous.

It was not so with the followers and imitators of Wordsworth and Byron. Many of them obtained a transient reputation, with no more real pretensions to renown than were found in their profuse indulgence in obscurity and rant. The new school of poets, subordinating understanding to insight, and logic to spiritual perception, aimed to restore the long-lost

connection between the bard and the seer. In thus striking at the deepest sources of poetry, they abandoned the current standards of excellence established by the most influential critics of the time; and when the leading organ of critical opinion, the "Edinburgh Review," decried the grandest, most profound and original passages of Wordsworth as the prolix outpourings of a "rapturous mysticism," as the dull products of "forced and affected ecstasies," the result was to bring criticism itself into disrepute, since it thus plainly showed its incapacity to discern what it derided. If men of the first class could thus be contemptuously underrated, fifth-rate men might well hope to pass off their really "forced and affected ecstasies" as the genuine inspiration of the Muse; since their unintelligible rant could call forth no harsher judgment than that rendered in the case of the loftiest spiritual experiences of imaginative genius, in the expression of which there were palpable marks of the presence of "the vision and the faculty divine." And not only was the criticism of the poetry of the time deficient in perception of the higher qualities of the new school of poets, but it was further vitiated by intense political prejudices and personal enmities; so that at last it became almost impossible for well-meaning readers to be honestly guided in their judgment of books by consulting the decisions of the self-created authorities in matters of literature and taste. Thus Keats was merely the friend and acquaintance of Hunt and Hazlitt; there was no evidence in

his verse of his political opinions; and yet he was brutally assailed in the "Quarterly Review" and in "Blackwood's Magazine" as a drooling, babyish fool, with no genius, because he happened to be connected with a radical set whom all good Tories were taught both to despise and abhor.

Procter grew up into manhood at the period when this fertility in original genius was accompanied with this anarchy in the decisions of critical jurisprudence. He was an imitator of none of his contemporaries; but what powers of thought, fancy, imagination, and passion he possessed were naturally influenced by the poetic medium in which his mind moved. He had a passionate love of poetry in every form in which it found expression, and even keenly appreciated the merits of poets who denied merit to each other. There was a singular union in him of boldness and modesty. When his feelings and imagination were touched, he resolutely abandoned himself to the inspiration of his theme, and ventured freely into fine audacities of thought and expression; but in individual disposition he was the reverse of self-assertion, and in conversation was rather reticent. There was, however, a precious something in his nature which attracted esteem and love. His numerous friends and acquaintances, including at least a hundred persons eminent or prominent in politics, art, literature, and science, never seemed disposed to exercise on him the intolerance they frequently displayed in their intercourse, or non-intercourse, with each other. The



imperturbable kindliness of his nature, the delicate sense of justice he evinced in refusing to have his literary opinions affected by political animosity or personal prejudice, and the absence in him of egotism while genially mixing with a crowd of able egotists, made him a delightful companion to all who had the pleasure of enjoying his companionship. It is probable that much of his diffidence, extending at times to self-abnegation, came from that dramatic element in his individual disposition which found through his genius brilliant, though not to him satisfactory, expression in his "Dramatic Scenes" and no less dramatic "Songs." His ambition evidently was to be an observer of human life and character, and, as a poet, to be able to pass out of himself at will into a world of imagined beings, in which impartial justice should be done to types of character and moods of mind widely different from his own. He wished to be a dramatist in the sphere of ideal life, as he was in actual life,—a dramatist through his sympathetic insight into minds and hearts that came under his daily observation, and for whose infirmities and defects he had the large toleration which is an indispensable element of true dramatic genius. His immense admiration of Robert Browning, a poet who appeared after he had himself almost abandoned even the habit of making verses, was due to his admiration of Browning's exceptional dramatic power, by which he multiplied his individual existence by making his mind inhabit and animate so many different forms of

human character. Procter had in his early poetic manhood a similar desire for this extension of his individual being; but he felt in his poetic middle age that he had not been endowed with a similar power of realizing it.

As Procter was born in 1787 and died in 1874, his life included three generations of poets, extending even to the period when the fame of Browning and Tennyson — authors who began to write after he had practically ceased to publish anything — was contested by a new brood of poets, now fighting for prominence in the public eye, with novel theories of poetry sustained by novel theories of criticism. All three of these generations seem to have loved and honored him. He was celebrated in verse by the octogenarian Landor and by the youthful Swinburne. “Barry,” exclaims Landor, —

“Barry, your spirit long ago  
Has haunted me ; at last I know  
The heart it springs from : one more sound  
Ne’er rested on poetic ground ;”

and Swinburne, after Procter had let fall, in a conversation with him and Bayard Taylor, that his poetry was now (1868) less known than it had been, could not rest until he had denied it in some graceful stanzas. There were some vernal blossoms, the young poet said, that “bear no fruit eternal ;” but he adds :—

“No time casts down, no time upraises,  
Such loves, such memories, and such praises  
As need no grace of sun or shower,

No saving screen from frost or thunder,  
To tend and house around and under  
The imperishable and peerless flower."

Indeed, there hardly ever was a sweet and an honorable old age cherished by more tender marks of domestic affection, and ministered to by a larger troop of attached friends and admirers, than the old age of this poet.

The interesting "Biographical Notes" published by his family, and the pleasing memories of him recorded in the charming little volume by Mr. Fields exhibit him as he was in himself, and as he appeared in his relations with his intimate friends. "The Autobiographical Sketch" provokingly stops at the very beginning of his career, and is characterized, or if we may invent a more intense word fitting his case, is "peculiarized," by his persistent habit of underrating his powers. He was the son of a man of moderate fortune, scanty education, and mediocre abilities, but one in whose nature parsimony was indissolubly connected with integrity, and who was uncompromisingly honest in thought, word, and act, without having the grace of generosity to make his rectitude lovable. His mother was simply "the kindest and tenderest mother in the world." At the age of five Bryan was sent to a boarding-school near London, and had to fight his way, as well as he could, among older boys; at the age of thirteen he was sent to the great public school of Harrow, where he bore himself creditably among the boys, both as to learning his lessons

and using his fists,—without, however, having any particular ambition to excel others either in scholarship or pugilism. Among his school-fellows there were two striplings afterwards celebrated all over the world,—Robert Peel, who lived to become one of the foremost statesmen of England; and Noel Byron, who attained an equal celebrity as a poet. Of Peel, Procter says nothing, though he must have shown as a boy some of the qualities which eventually made him the great compromiser between opposite political factions, and may perhaps in his dealings with other boys have early given in his adhesion to the economic doctrine which only in his old age he consented to carry out, of “buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest.” Of Byron, Procter says that none of his companions could have dreamed of his blossoming into a poet, as he was loud, coarse, capable—very capable—of a boy’s vulgar enjoyments, playing at hockey and racquets, and “occasionally indulging in pugilistic combats.” Procter’s vacations were spent in a large mansion of his mother’s uncle, where, he tells us, his imagination was first awakened by a bedroom papered in the old-fashioned way, which “suggested many wonderful thoughts” and was not without its terrors. There looked out of the paper, he says, “strange faces and objects, partaking at once of the bird and the beast,”—some beautiful, some terrible, but all disturbing to his brain. He began to dream, to recollect his dreams, to dwell upon them, and to strive “to discover their meanings

and origin." Then the meadows, fields, and gardens around the house stirred a strange rapture in his soul. There happened also to be in his uncle's family a female servant who was "the daughter of a man who had failed in a profession or business," and who was the most cultivated person in the spacious mansion. She had read some of the English historians and poets, was familiar with the novels of Richardson and Fielding, and narrated to the eager boy "their stories fluently and emphatically, and with marvellous taste and discrimination of the characters. But above all — high above all — she worshipped Shakspeare. She it was," he adds, "who first taught me to know and love him," and by reciting to him passages from the plays made him resolve, "I will buy a Shakspeare with the first money I get." This vow he kept; and thus, as a boy, he entered "into a world beyond his own." Shakspeare led him at last to study the whole dramatic literature of the Elizabethan age, and the result was evident when he came to publish his "Dramatic Poems."

The youth on leaving Harrow was not sent to Oxford, because his father, "a saving soul," was determined against it by the statement of a friend he had consulted. "I never learned much at Oxford," said this critic, "and my boy has learned nothing — nothing except extravagant habits." Bryan was accordingly sent directly to study law under a solicitor in a Wiltshire village. He thoroughly prepared himself for this profession by "reading all the English



poets from Chaucer down to Burns," all the romances of Le Sage, Fielding, Richardson, Sterne, Inchbald, and Radcliffe, most of the classics which had been translated into English, and most of the histories accessible to ordinary English readers. In order further to qualify himself for the arduous duties of the practice of law he fell in love, and began to write verses. At the age of twenty he went up to London with the intention of living by his pen, and at the same time to prosecute the legal studies thus happily begun. It was not until 1815, when he contributed some poems to the "Literary Gazette," that his talent attracted attention. In 1816 his father died leaving him a modest competence, which he was disposed to spend freely, though at about this time he began the serious study of conveyancing, and soon afterwards entered into partnership with a solicitor,—an unproductive partnership as it proved, which was dissolved in 1820, after he had incurred some losses. A passion for literary distinction which for many years had been stirring within him now found an adequate outlet in his "Dramatic Scenes, and Other Poems," published in 1819. The volume passed deservedly to a second edition. In 1820 it was succeeded by "A Sicilian Story;" in the same year by "Marcian Colonna;" and in 1821 by the tragedy of "Mirandola," which was not only a success on the stage, having a run of sixteen nights, but also a success with the reading public, passing rapidly through three editions. The author's gains reached the sum of £630. In

1823 appeared "The Flood of Thessaly, and Other Poems;" and then, with the exception of "Effigies Poeticæ," a thin volume published in 1824, the author's literary ambition subsided. The reason for this is found in the fact that the poet had realized his poetic ideal in one of the happiest marriages recorded in the lives and loves of the poets. In 1820 he had been introduced to the family of Basil Montague. He fell in love with a daughter of Mrs. Montague by a former husband, became engaged to her in 1821, and married her in 1824. He thus obtained the great prize of life,—a prize in winning which either Dante, Shakspeare, Milton, or Byron might have envied while congratulating him. He insured his domestic happiness and domestic peace by marrying a noble woman, whose talents and accomplishments fitted her to appear in any society in Great Britain on a footing of equality, who could enter no society where she would not be recognized as a brilliant addition to it, and who tenderly loved and appreciated the husband by whom she was adored.

His domestic happiness he celebrated in his well-known "Poet's Song to his Wife;" but we should rather select some passages from the little-known "Epistle from an Obscure Philosopher," as more autobiographic in spirit. In this he describes both the ecstasy of the lover and the calm "sober certainty of waking bliss" of the husband:—

She stood disclosed,  
A perfect soul within a perfect form ;

Unparalleled, intelligent, divine.  
Dreams of some inner Heaven then took my soul  
Captive, and flushed the thrilling nerves with joy,  
Commingling with my sleep and blessing it.  
And when she warmed with love, my eyes amazed  
Met thrice the wonders I before had seen ;  
I drank in fragrance thousand times more sweet  
Than ever lay upon the hyacinth's lip ;  
Music I heard, sphere-tuned, harmonious,  
Ravishing earth and sky : swarms of delight  
Encompassed me, until my soul o'erwhelmed  
Sank in the conflict ; and I then poured forth  
My heart in numbers such as lovers use : —

O perfect Love, soft joy, untinged with pain !  
O sky kept cloudless by the sighs of Spring !  
O Bird, that bear'st sweet sounds through sun and rain,  
Give thy heart way, and sing !

Look down, dear Love, as Heaven looks down on earth !  
Be near me, round me, like the enfolding air !  
Impart some beauty from thy beauteous worth,  
Or be thyself less fair.

As the hart panteth for the water-brooks,  
As the dove moaneth in the lone pine-tree,  
So, left unsunned by thy care-charming looks,  
I pant, I mourn for thee !

— She came unto my home ; and with her came  
Infinite love, content, divine repose.  
Life rose above its height, and we beheld  
Beauty in all things, everywhere delight !  
The sun that dwelt in our own hearts shed forth  
Its beams upon the world, and brightened it ;  
And from that brightness, as the ground takes back  
The dews it gently lends, we gathered light  
That led us through the dim sweet paths of life,  
Until our hearts bloomed forth in happiness.

It is not surprising that the lover, blessed in possessing the object of his affection, should have resumed his profession as a conveyancer, and worked steadily to provide his goddess with a suitable temple. At the time he married, the property bequeathed to him by his father yielded an income of five hundred pounds. He added largely to this by laboring with all his might to make himself a conveyancer of the first class; he worked so hard that for some time he sat up all night for two nights in every week, in order that his business might be effectually done, and added further to his income by taking into his office some forty or fifty pupils, among whom were two who afterwards became distinguished in literature; namely, A. W. Kinglake, the author of "Eothen" and "The Invasion of the Crimea," and Eliot Warburton, the author of "The Crescent and the Cross." By indomitable industry, by sheer practical, prosaic work, Procter obtained the means of making his London house one of the great centres of literary and intellectual society. As a man and as a poet he was perfectly contented with the domestic paradise he had created by his professional exertions, and gave vent to the poetic impulses stirring within him only secretly, and as it were by stealth,—singing the joyousness of wine, in which he only moderately indulged; exulting in glad conceptions of the sea, on which he never ventured, even to cross the patch of water which separates Dover from Calais; and putting himself into a number of dramatic positions, some of

which were happily foreign to his own. All these moods of his brooding intellect and heart, — some of them resting on solid grounds of individual experience, but most of them springing from imagined scenes, incidents, and characters intensely realized to his own mind as he dreamed by his happy fireside, — suddenly blazed out, eight years after his happy marriage, in his book of “English Songs.” The volume gained at once an extensive popularity which it still retains. It will probably float more securely down the stream of time than any of his other works.

In the same year (1832) that the songs were published, Procter was appointed to the office of Metropolitan Commissioner of Lunacy. Whether he owed this distinction to the fine poetic frenzy exhibited in his lyrics may be doubted; but from his ceasing to publish any more verses, it may be suspected that he considered his new post as one which directed him rather to keep a sharp lookout on poets than further to bring his own sanity into question. In 1835 he made the mistake of writing “The Life of Edmund Kean,” — a publication unfortunate in every respect, and which was mercilessly criticised in the “Quarterly Review” and “Blackwood’s Magazine.” The latter periodical had for years pursued him with an apparently motiveless malice; and the appearance of the Life of Kean furnished it with an opportunity for defamation which it did not hesitate to seize. “This,” it said, “is the silliest book of the season. To say that it is like a couple of bottles of small-beer would be to libel



that fluid." In 1866 he published a memoir which was worthy both of his heart and his head,—his charming volume on Charles Lamb. "I have found in your work," Carlyle wrote to him, "something so touching, brave, serene, and pious that I cannot but write to you one brief word of recognition. . . . Brevity, perspicuity, graceful clearness; then also perfect veracity, gentleness, lovingness, justness, peaceable candor throughout; a fine, kindly sincerity to all comers; with sharp enough insight, too, quick recognition graphically rendered,—all the qualities, in short, which such a book could have I find visible in this, now dating, it appears, in your seventy-seventh year. Every page of it recalls the old Procter whom I used to talk with forty-two years ago, unaltered except as the finest wines, and such like, alter by ripening to the full; a man as if *transfigured* by his heavy-laden years, and to whom the hoary head is as a crown. Upon all which another old man congratulates him, and says with a pathetic kind of joy his *Euge, euge*." In 1861, five years before this, Procter had resigned his office as one of the Commissioners of Lunacy, owing to the condition of his health; and the last ten years of his life were more or less oppressed by the infirmities of age. He died on the 4th of October, 1874.

Procter's relations with all the men of letters of his time were cordial and friendly; but his sympathies were specially attracted to that circle of writers which included Lamb, Hunt, and Hazlitt. He liked them

all the more because they were atrociously slandered and socially in bad odor. Professor Ticknor, who met almost everybody of note in England, was once introduced to this cluster of authors, who despised fashionable society and were rejected by it. In 1819, at a dinner at Godwin's house, and afterwards at a meeting of the Saturday Night Club at Hunt's, he saw "these people," as he somewhat superciliously calls them, together, when they felt called upon "to show off and produce an effect;" for then "Lamb's gentle humor, Hunt's passion, and Curran's volubility, Hazlitt's sharpness and point, and Godwin's great head full of cold brains, all coming into contact and conflict, and agreeing in nothing but their common hatred of everything that has been more successful than their own works, made one of the most curious and amusing *olla podrida* I ever met." It is somewhat surprising that a man whose entire studies in Europe were directed to the object of making himself an accomplished student and critic of various literatures should dispose of such persons as Lamb, Hunt, Hazlitt, and Godwin in such a contemptuous way, and speak of them as "these people," thus echoing the fashionable slang current in the higher social circles in which Ticknor habitually moved. Indeed, nothing he records of the conversation at Holland House is so good as two remarks made to him by Hazlitt,—one that "Curran was the Homer of blackguards," and the other that the Emperor Alexander of Russia "was the Sir Charles Grandison of Europe."

Procter evidently thought that "these people" were worthy of being cultivated, though he knew them so intimately that none of their faults escaped his attention. If he is uncharitable at all, it is in his estimate of Godwin. He was repelled by the frigidity of that philosopher's character. The poet Campbell, he said, had ordinarily a cold, Scotch, cautious, and canny manner; but "there was sap behind the bark. If the oppression of the Poles, or any other flagrant enormity, was brought before him, his energy quickly flamed up. And he was also very vivacious, not to say riotous, in his cups." Godwin, on the contrary, was ever "very cold, very selfish, very calculating." All his philanthropy was put into his books, leaving nothing to be put into his life. His conduct towards Shelley "was merely an endeavor to extract from him as much money as possible." The special champion of equity as distinguished from legality, he still did not hesitate to deny a pecuniary liability to a friend, because "there was no witness to the loan." And yet this man, Procter adds, "has in his study compiled fine rhetorical sentences which strangers have been ready to believe flowed warm from his heart. I have always thought him like one of those cold intellectual demons of whom we read in French and German stories, who come upon earth to do no good to any one and harm to many." This seems to us too harsh a judgment of the author of "Political Justice" and of the novel of "Caleb Williams." Godwin was the type of a class of men whose hearts find no adequate

expression except through their brains. There is passion enough both in his political writings and in his romances, but it is passion intellectualized ; passion used, even economized, to give heat to analysis and impetus to reasoning. His big head rested on a short, slight body ; and all the blood he had was sent "through the veins of his intellectual frame." He was poor, and as his poverty proceeded from the indisposition of the general public to pay for reasonings which were intended to prove that the people were the needless victims of superstition and injustice, and that they might, by following the processes of his logic, emancipate themselves from their oppressors, he was compelled to keep up the interesting connection between his strong mind and his frail body by borrowing from his friends and acquaintances money which was never repaid. Talfourd tells us that the next day after his first introduction to him at Lamb's chambers, Godwin called upon him, and, after "a little chat on indifferent matters," carelessly observed that he was in need of £150 for a few weeks, and requested Talfourd to lend it to him. On learning that his new acquaintance was a young lawyer struggling for existence, and had no money for such a benevolent purpose, Godwin blandly remarked, "Oh, dear ! I thought you were a young gentleman of fortune ; don't mention it, don't mention it ; I shall do very well elsewhere ;" and then continued the conversation first started without any seeming consciousness that there had been such an insignificant break in it. It seems

to us that there was nothing of the demon in Godwin, though there was much of the intellectual pedant. His calm, supreme confidence in the unassailable truth of his opinions may have come from his laying an undue emphasis on the first syllable of his name ; and his habit of borrowing money from everybody who would lend it was distinguished from Hunt's only by the absence of geniality in his manner of asking for such favors, and perhaps by a thoroughly reasoned, a true philosophical absence of gratitude to those who conferred them.

Procter made the acquaintance of Leigh Hunt in 1817. He found him residing in a small and scantily furnished house, with a tiny room for a study, which contained few books ; but among them were an edition of the Italian poets in many volumes, Warton's edition of Milton's minor poems, and the complete works of Spenser. No edition of Shakspeare was in the collection. "There were always a few cut flowers, in a glass of water, on the table." His suppers of cold meat and salad had little to tempt the epicure, but the guests were such men as Lamb, Hazlitt, Peacock, and Coulson ; and at small cost the company enjoyed all the raptures and glories of conviviality. Thought and wit, knowledge and humor, were not wanting in such an assemblage ; and the festivities were sometimes prolonged to two or three o'clock in the morning. Hunt, says Procter, "was always in difficulty about money ; but he was seldom sad, and never sour." His friends did what they could to prevent



poverty from souring the disposition of a man who ever resolutely opposed gayety to misery, and preached the gospel of cheer while bailiffs were watching at his humble door. He reminds us more of old Dekkar the Elizabethan dramatist, who turned his calamities into commodities, and though in a debtors' prison was still "all felicity up to the brim," than of any other professional man of letters in English literary history. Mr. Fields, who saw much of Hunt in 1851, thirty-four years after Procter first made his acquaintance, declares that "in his bare cottage in Hammer-smith the temperament of his spirit heaped up such riches of fancy that kings, if wise ones, might envy his magic power. . . . When he looked out of his dingy old windows on the four black elms in front of his dwelling, he saw, or thought he saw, a vast forest, and he could hear, in the note of one poor sparrow even, the silvery voices of a hundred nightingales."

Procter was the constant friend of this Harold Skimpole in money matters as well as in heart matters. "I have reasons," Hunt said to Mr. Fields, "for liking our dear friend Procter's wine beyond what you saw when we dined together at his table the other day." It is a pity that Procter did not record more special examples of Hunt's peculiarities of thought and character than he has done in his tribute to his old associate. Perhaps the one instance he gives is better than any other he could recall to his memory. Hunt "led a very correct and domestic life;" during an intimacy extending to forty years,

Procter never heard him utter an oath or "indulge in an indelicate hint or allusion;" but he had a crotchet or theory about the social intercourse between the sexes which he at one time harped upon so frequently as to bore his companions without winning any converts to his opinion. "Dash him!" said Hazlitt, "it's always coming out, like a rash. Why does n't he write a book about it, and get rid of it?"

This was exactly what Hazlitt himself did, in the strange hallucination which clouded his keen intellect, and for the time made his friends fear that he would end his days in an insane asylum, when he fell madly in love with Sophia Walker, the daughter of the keeper of the lodging-house where he resided. He wrote and published "*Liber Amoris*,"—one of the most mortifying instances ever exhibited in literature of a strong man, mature in age, and somewhat cynical in his observations of life, falling violently back into the mental and sensuous condition of a babbling, blubbering, boobyish boy; but after the book was published, "the rash" that had broken out all over him subsided, and his intellect resumed its normal clearness and force. While under the influence of his insane passion he not only abandoned all literary work, but he bored every acquaintance he met with the most minute details of his infatuation. "I am a cursed fool," he said, as in the course of his wanderings he happened to buttonhole Procter; "I saw J—— going into Wills' coffee-house yesterday morning; he spoke to me. I followed him into the house, and while he

lunched I told him the whole story. Then I wandered into Regent's Park, where I met one of M——'s sons. I walked with him some time, and on his using some civil expression, by ——! sir, I told him the whole story. Well, sir, I then went and called on Haydon, but he was out. There was only his man Salmon there; but by ——! I could not help myself. It all came out; the whole cursed story! Afterwards I went to look at some lodgings at Pimlico. The landlady at one place, after some explanations as to rent, etc., said to me very kindly, 'I am afraid you are not well, sir?' 'No, ma'am,' said I, 'I am not well;' and on inquiring further, the devil take me if I did not let out the whole story from beginning to end!" Procter knew the girl who thus degraded Hazlitt into an imbecile chatterer. "Her face," he says, "was round and small, and her eyes were motionless, glassy, and without any speculation (apparently) in them. Her movements in walking were very remarkable, for I never observed her to make a step. She went onwards in a sort of wavy, sinuous manner, like the movement of a snake. She was silent, or uttered monosyllables only, and was very demure. Her steady, unmoving gaze upon the person she was addressing was exceedingly unpleasant." This essentially stupid and vulgar wench may have had in her some of the fascination of the witch; but we find nothing in Procter's description of her, or her traits as exhibited in the ravings of her lover in "*Liber Amoris*," which are not consistent with the

theory that she was quite an ordinary specimen of selfish, cold-blooded maidenhood, endowed with a low kind of feminine craft, cunning, and malice, and on the whole the occasion rather than the cause of the unexpected outburst in Hazlitt of a sentimental madness as wild as any recorded in the *Confessions of Rousseau*.

Of Hazlitt as a writer, thinker, and critic, Procter had a high opinion, and he also esteemed him as a man. "Some things," he says, "of which he has been accused were referable merely to temporary humor or irritability, which was not frequent, and which was laid aside in an hour. All other times (by far the greater portion of his life) he was a candid and reasonable man. He felt acutely the injuries and slanders, however, which were spit forth on him, and resented them." When a question arose in a company of intellectual men, "the most sensible reply always came from him." So enduring was the impression left by Hazlitt's power on Procter's mind that he was never tired of quoting pointed sentences culled from the writings of his friend; and shortly before his death he wrote to Mr. Fields, "I despair of the age that has forgotten to read Hazlitt."

In the "Sketches" of literary men, now first published, Procter adds little to what he had previously written of Charles Lamb. This delightful companion, distinguished not more by his genius than by his character,—his character being indeed a prominent element in his genius,—was among the dearest and

most valued of Procter's friends. Lamb signs himself, in a short letter printed in this volume, "yours ever and two evers." Mr. Fields's book contains a characteristic anecdote of Lamb's generosity. "Thinking, from a depression of spirits which Procter in his young manhood was once laboring under, that perhaps he was in want of money, Lamb looked him earnestly in the face as they were walking one day in the country together, and blurted out, in his stammering way, 'My dear boy, I have a hundred-pound note in my desk that I really don't know what to do with: oblige me by taking it, and getting the confounded thing out of my keeping.'" Procter assured him that he was not in an impecunious condition, but found it hard work to make his companion believe it.

Like the rest of the race of authors, and indeed, it may be added, the rest of mankind, Procter knew Samuel Rogers, the poet and banker. Rogers must have begun to look old forty years before he died. Jokes which date back as far as the year 1830 depend for their point on the fact that there was then something withered and ghastly in his countenance. The story runs that an acquaintance who met him in a public conveyance, looking like a corpse on its travels, said to him, "Now that you are rich enough, Rogers, why don't you set up a hearse of your own?" Mr. Fields, who saw him in his last years, denies that his face, faded as were its features, looked spectral and sepulchral. He gives an amusing account of the old



man's indignation at Samuel Lawrence's recent portrait of him. "Rogers himself wished to compare it with his own face, and had a looking-glass held up before him. We sat in silence as he regarded the picture attentively, and waited for his criticism. Soon he burst forth, 'Is my nose so dashed sharp as that?' 'No! no!' we all exclaimed, 'the artist is at fault there, sir.' 'I thought so,' he cried; 'he has painted the face of a dead man, dash him!' Some one said, 'The portrait is too hard.' 'I won't be painted as a hard man,' rejoined Rogers. 'I am not a hard man, am I, Procter?' Procter deprecated with energy such an idea as that. Looking at the portrait again, Rogers said, with great feeling, 'Children would run away from that face, and they never ran away from me.'"

What most impressed Mr. Fields was the feeble manner in which Rogers's best stories were received by the gentlemen present at his breakfast-table. Mentioning his surprise to Procter, the latter told him that they "had heard the same anecdotes every week, perhaps for half a century, from the same lips." In fact, the bard of Memory had almost lost the faculty whose pleasures he had sung. The winding-sheet nearly covered his mind years before it enveloped his body. Procter, who remembered him in what may be called the prime of his old age, says, "It has been rumored that he was a sayer of bitter things. I know that he was a giver of good things; a kind and amiable patron, where a patron was

wanted; never ostentatious or oppressive, and always a friend in need. He was ready with his counsel; ready with his money. I never put his generosity to the test, but I know enough to testify that it existed, and was often exercised in a delicate manner and on the slightest hint." Procter gives but one instance of his "sub-acid words." After going to see the statue of Campbell, he remarked, "It is the first time that I have seen him stand straight for many years."

Perhaps the account of Coleridge is the most notable of Procter's "Sketches." Wordsworth caught Coleridge in his inspired moments, when he described him as

"The rapt one with the godlike forehead;  
The heaven-eyed creature."

Procter speaks of him as having "a weighty head, dreaming gray eyes, full, sensual lips, and a look and manner which were entirely wanting in firmness and decision. His notions also appeared weak and undecided, and his voice had nothing of the sharpness or ring of a resolute man. When he spoke, his words were thick and slow; and when he read poetry, his utterance was altogether a chant." Procter, like all persons who met Coleridge, was amazed at the immense extent of his reading, ranging from Jacob Behmen and Thomas Aquinas to "Peter Simple" and "Tom Cringle's Log." He was ready to talk with "everybody on everything," and grateful to the listener who would relieve him of some portion of the burden of his information by taking it, through the ear, on his

own shoulders. One amusing instance is given of the impossibility of dethroning him from his dominant place in conversation. Dining once with a company of lawyers, he provoked one of the party into saying to his neighbor at the table, "I'll stop this fellow;" and he accordingly said to the host, "I've not forgotten my promise to give you the extract from 'The Pandects.' It was the ninth chapter you were alluding to. It begins: '*Ac veteres quidam philosophi.*'" "Pardon me," Coleridge at once said, "there I think you are in error. The ninth chapter begins in this way: '*Incident scæpe causæ,*' etc." Who could stop a talker so ready with unexpected knowledge as that? Again, Coleridge once went from Highgate to London to consult a friend regarding some matters affecting the welfare of his unfortunate son Hartley. He arrived at two o'clock; found a number of persons conversing in his friend's drawing-room; talked until four o'clock, when dinner was announced; talked all through the dinner; talked all through the evening to the time when the last stage for Highgate was announced; and then hurriedly took leave, saying to the host, "My dear Z——, I will come to you some other day, and talk to you about our dear Hartley." "He had," said Procter, "quite forgotten his son and everybody else, in the delight of having such an enraptured audience." Again, Wordsworth, apologizing to Rogers for being late at one of his breakfasts, said that he had been to see Coleridge, and had been detained by listening to his inexhaustible flow of

conversation. Rogers naturally inquired, "How was it you called so early upon him?" "Oh," replied Wordsworth, "I am to dine with him this evening, and—" "And," said Rogers, concluding the sentence, "you wanted to take the sting out of him beforehand."

Thomas De Quincey, the author of "The Confessions of an Opium-Eater," was a writer of whom Procter knew little, and the little he knew he cordially disliked. What he says of him in the "Notices" is right enough so far as it goes, but he evidently had no appreciation of the massiveness and range of his erudition, or of his grand qualities of sentiment, reason, and imagination. The defects of De Quincey's writings spring from the fact that they are all, more or less, "Confessions." Even when he abandons the form of personal narrative, and expatiates on politics, theology, history, philosophy, art, literature, and science, the peculiarities of his individuality are ever prominent. Whether he discourses of the Cæsars or of Dr. Parr, of the Essenes or of Wordsworth's poetry, of German literature or of Tory principles, a subtle element runs through the most widely varying subjects he treats, giving evidence that he is writing a kind of psychological autobiography even in discussing topics which are seemingly most impersonal in themselves. This egoism leads him to violate the law of proportion, and to disturb the relations naturally existing between the different parts of whatever subject he grapples with. He wanders

into an episode where at first he meant only to bring in a pertinent illustration ; and when he once starts off in one of these zigzag movements of his mind, it is impossible for him to keep himself to his "objective point." He translates trivialities into thundering polysyllables, and subjects them to the most painful processes of analysis, merely because they have become associated in his mind with some obscure oddity in his own intellectual constitution or moral experience. His caprices, his personal animosities, his obstinate prejudices, his tendency in discussing the most important questions to lay stress on the weakest argument for the side he supports, are but signs of the impatient pressure of Thomas De Quincey's individuality to be uppermost in everything his mind touches, even when the matter under discussion has to ordinary readers no connection with the said Thomas at all. But with all these deductions from the value of his writings as a whole, the plain fact remains that he was a scholar, a thinker, a great master of English style, and a man whose general largeness and depth of nature are evident even in his strangest freaks of intellectual eccentricity. Above all, he was the last of that school of English prose writers who had sufficient grasp and power of mind to venture on the composition of long, intricate, artfully balanced sentences, which took up in their majestic sweep all the subsidiary considerations connected with the main thought to be expressed, either limiting its scope or adding to its force, and which



were brought to a rhythmical end in cadences that pleased the ear as well as satisfied the mind. Campbell says of Wallace, the stalwart hero of Scotland, —

“The sword which seemed fit for archangel to wield  
Was light in his terrible hand.”

Considered as an intellectual weapon, the long sentence, so efficient in the hands of Hooker, Taylor, and Milton, was generally abandoned for Dryden's smaller weapon, even in the age when Clarendon gave one of the latest examples of its effective use. Burke seized and brandished it anew, wielding it as such a giant might have been expected to wield it, while at the same time freely availing himself of the rapier, the dagger, and all the other small arms in the armory of rhetoric which had, from the time of Dryden, been found to be the easiest for ordinary controversialists to handle. The prominent prose writers of the present century, including such widely contrasted masters of prose eloquence as Southey, Landor, and Macaulay, did not dare to take up the sword which had somewhat rusted since it fell from the hands of Burke. De Quincey felt no such distrust of his powers. The weapon “fit only for an archangel to wield” is certainly not “light” as he swings and brandishes it; but at any rate it is one which he alone among his contemporaries ventured to grasp and wield with a resolute purpose. Indeed, the prose style of De Quincey is of itself evidence that he possessed an original and creative mind.

But it is time to turn from the authors that Procter knew to a short consideration of his own works. His dramatic scenes, his songs, and his narrative and descriptive poems form a body of verse of no inconsiderable bulk and variety, — in bulk exceeding that of the poetic works of Collins, Gray, and Campbell combined. It cannot be said that any portions of his writings can claim to elude criticism on the ground that they were youthful productions. In 1815, when the name of “Barry Cornwall” first became known by his occasional contributions to the “Literary Gazette,” he was three years older than Keats was when he died. In 1819, when his volume of “Dramatic Scenes, and Other Poems” appeared, he was two years older than Shelley was when he died. Whatever immaturity may be discovered in Procter’s earlier efforts could therefore not be referred to any immaturity in respect to age. Charles Lamb affirmed that if he had found any of his “dear boy’s” dramatic scenes in exploring the almost forgotten works of the minor dramatists of the Elizabethan age, he would not have hesitated to reprint them in his “Specimens;” but his “dear boy” was then thirty-two years old. There can be no doubt that by brooding long over his models Procter had caught something of their peculiar audacity and *verve*, and become capable of reproducing, in a manner of his own, that strange charm which fascinates us in the best passages of Middleton, Dekkar, Webster, Heywood, and Fletcher. His success in this, however, seems to us greater in his

“Dramatic Fragments” than in his first “Dramatic Scenes.” But taking his works as a whole, the one criticism to be made upon them is that their apparent substance, estimated by the number of printed pages they occupy, is disproportioned to their real substance, estimated by the amount of thought, imagination, knowledge, experience, and passion they convey. We have to pick and cull, sift and reject, when we come to distinguish between the faculties which the poet displays and the matter on which they are exercised. A certain antiquated kind of reviewing, much cherished still by what Procter would himself have called the “ferrets” of criticism, depends for its success on discovering unwarrantable rhymes, defective lines, and broken or discordant images in the verses it reviews; but the fundamental question, in such a poet as Procter, relates to substance rather than to form. Judged by this test, he exhibits a decided predominance of stimulant over nutriment, of melody over matter, of poetic quality and force over original poetic observation and experience. However large, rich, eloquent, melodious, and potent may be the power of utterance, the inevitable question at last comes up to the poet as to the man of business, “What have you to say?” Wordsworth answered it, more or less satisfactorily, to the last generation; Tennyson has answered, and is now happily alive to continue answering it, with a somewhat faltering tongue, to the present generation; but there still remains a mischievous tendency to exalt the mere pos-

session and exercise of poetic faculty, apart from the matter in which it is embodied. Literary history proves that all great poets are distinguished by their more or less rapid accumulation and assimilation of poetic materials, drawn from all quarters of the known intellectual and moral world, as well as from their own observation and experience; and that their divining and shaping imaginations operate on a tangible substance of knowledge, however different may be their modes of representing, transforming, or transfiguring it. After making all proper deductions, however, from the mass of Procter's poetry, we find that what remains is a solid addition to the poetical literature of the century. His songs, as Longfellow says, "have the very pulse of music in them;" even when little is expressed that has any intellectual and imaginative value, the sentiment and the melody are still sweet and attractive, and there are some scores of them which are remarkable for other qualities than the mere indefinite beauty which comes from vague images wedded to harmonious sounds. "The Sea," "King Death," "The Sea-King," "Belshazzar," "Wine," "Song of the Outcast," "A Storm," "Fuller's Bird," "A Poor House," "To the Singer Pasta," "The Lake has Burst," "A Bacchanalian Song," "The Blood Horse," "The Rising of the North," have a grand lyric energy, which produces an instantaneous effect on the brain as well as on the blood. Among the "Unpublished Verses," printed now for the first time in the present volume, "The Burial

Club" and "The Field Preacher" have a similar energy. Then what can exceed the exquisite beauty and softness of "The Chamber Scene," "A Repose," "After Death," "To the South Wind," "Home," "I Die for thy Sweet Love," and other poems of the same general kind? "Touch us gently, Time!" is perhaps the most popular of all his songs. Longfellow sent him, in 1853, a slip from an American newspaper, wherein the editor states, that in opening twenty-seven of his exchanges he found that each of them contained this home-inspired lyric. Longfellow then goes on to say that on the 1st of June, 1853, it must have been left at a hundred and forty thousand doors, and read by half a million readers. "The pleasure I have had," he concludes, "in seeing this poem so reflecting and flashing from thousands of mirrors makes me hope it will give you pleasure to see it." Perhaps "The Poet's Song to his Wife," "Golden Tresséd Adelaide," "A Prayer in Sickness," and "Softly woo away her Breath" should be welcomed in every household where "Touch us gently, Time!" has entered with its sweet consecration of home life and home feeling.

A large portion of Procter's work consists of miscellaneous poems, from which numerous examples might be cited of his tenderness, thoughtfulness, melody, and grace; of his deep and delicate sentiment, playful fancy, intense passion, and strong, daring imagination. In reading them one is impressed anew with the exceeding wealth of England in poetry, by



the mere thought that she can afford to forget so much in Procter's verse which would enrich a more barren poetical literature than her own. What she does not forget, however, is excellent; and the poet, dying at the advanced age of eighty-seven, had not the mortification of outliving his reputation. The melodies which had charmed the generation of Wordsworth and Byron charmed also the generation of Tennyson and Browning, and still charm the generation of Buchanan, Rossetti, and Swinburne. At the age of eighty, Procter wrote to Mr. Fields that he had recently visited the house where he had played with a wooden sword when he was at the age of five. "What," he exclaims, "has occurred since? Why, nothing that is worth putting down on paper. A few nonsense verses, a flogging or two (richly deserved), and a few white-bait dinners, and the whole is reckoned up. Let us begin again." This is the transient, querulous discontent of an old man vexed with bodily infirmities, and for the moment forgetting the glow and gladness which he had put into his verse, because both the gladness and the glow had been in his life. In one of his "Dramatic Fragments" he put into the mouth of an assumed character this statement:—

"Age is a grave

Where Kindness and quelled Passion and mute Love

Lie, hand in hand, cold, — dead, — perhaps forgotten!"

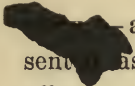
But this was not the old age of Procter. Passion was quelled, but kindness and love neither died out of his own heart nor were wanting in the hearts of

his family and friends. He had lived a good life, unspotted by any mean or base passion, and delivered over to no impulse of his impassioned Muse which made him violate one of his duties as a husband and father; and while he was on his death-bed, his "non-sense verses" were sung or read by thousands of men and women he had never seen, whose hearts and imaginations his poetry had stimulated, enriched, elevated, consoled, and cheered.

## DANIEL DERONDA.<sup>1</sup>

IT is a common remark that, since the publication of "Adam Bede," the appearance of a new work by George Eliot is welcomed, not as an ordinary literary incident, but as an important literary event. Accordingly "Daniel Deronda" has been, during the past season, the one book which has attracted all classes of readers, which has been the subject of general comment, and which has elicited criticisms as diverse as the different points of view from which it has been surveyed. During the serial publication of the novel there was manifested as little disposition to deny the reality as the originality of the leading character; for he took a strong hold on the sympathies of readers. Questions as to what he would do next, and whether he would marry Mirah or Gwendolen, were warmly, sometimes fiercely, debated; and to judge from the tone of the disputants, he appeared to be a much more real personage to them than Mr. Tilden or Mr. Hayes. The notion of assailing him as a reflecting puppet, a sort of personified meditativeness, has sprung up since the almost universal disappointment at the unanticipated conclusion of the

<sup>1</sup> North American Review, January, 1877.

 a conclusion which many readers have resented as though it were a personal grievance or affront. It would, however, seem that no embodied abstraction could have thus become the object of such intense personal interest; and the vexation at the *dénouement* is the strongest of all proofs that the character has the reality which marks all great imaginative creations.

In classifying works of fiction, the general rule is to discriminate between novels of incident and novels of character; between novels in which the main interest is in what the persons *do*, and novels in which the main interest is in what the persons *are*. "Daniel Deronda" is a novel both of incident and character; and in addition, it exhibits a wealth of subtile, deep, and comprehensive thought altogether unexampled among the novels of the time. One feels in reading, re-reading, and studying the book, that in respect to mere largeness of intellect, it is unmatched among the works of the most distinguished novelists of the century. Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray may excel George Eliot in their special departments of fiction; but if we apply the intellectual test, and ask which of the four has mastered most thoroughly the knowledge and advanced thought of the age, the judgment of all cultivated persons would be given unreservedly in favor of the author of "Daniel Deronda." In sobriety, breadth, and massiveness of understanding, in familiar acquaintance with the latest demonstrated truths of physical, historical, economic, and metaphysical sci-

ence, and in the capacity to use these truths as materials for a philosophy of nature and human nature, this woman is the acknowledged peer of such men as John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. Leaving out of view the peculiar powers which make the great novelist, and fastening our attention on the understanding alone, it is obvious that George Eliot might hold in one corner of her broad brain all that portion of Scott's intellect which dealt with the philosophy of history as distinguished from its picturesqueness; in another corner, all that part of the intellect of Dickens which in dealing with political economy was prone to substitute benevolent sentiments for inexorable laws; and in still another corner, all that portion of the intellect of Thackeray which penetrated beneath the social shams he pitilessly satirized to the principles which make society possible. It is difficult to conceive of either of these eminent masters of characterization as adequately treating any subject requiring great powers of analysis and generalization; but a thoroughly reasoned treatise on ethics, politics, social science, or the philosophy of history from the pen of George Eliot would excite no surprise at all, as her intellect is plainly competent to such a task. This general largeness of mind, this tranquil grasp of the outlying problems of human life and human destiny, distinguishes her from all the other novelists of the age; for she not only looks at things and into things, but she looks through things to the laws of life they illustrate and by which they are governed. She dispels



that pleasant illusion, fondled by most writers of fiction, that the individual is dominant in human affairs, and gets what he desires if he has the energy to struggle for it. The pitiless laws of existence, which are independent of human wish or will, and which crush all who oppose their action, she perceives with a sad certainty of insight. To the egotist and sentimentalist, raging or moaning at the constitution of things, Nature seems cruel and Providence seems cruel; but she, looking at individuals in relation to the mighty external forces they obey or resist, sees that unselfishness is the condition both of usefulness and happiness, and that Providence has no pets. ✓

But George Eliot has wide-ranging sympathies as well as large discourse of reason, delicious humor as well as affluent thought, a shaping and realizing power of imagination as well as manifold resources of observation and experience. Indeed, all her faculties and qualities are but the varying expression of one large, noble, and opulent nature. In depicting human life, her power of characterization stoops to the humblest and rises to the loftiest types of human character. It ranges from Mrs. Poyser to Dorothea Brooke; from the frivolous Hetty to the superb Gwendolen; from the mentally imprisoned rustic worthies who gather at the alehouse in Ravenloe to the crowd of emancipated mechanics who fearlessly debate all questions in their London tavern club; from representatives of religious prudence, provident even in their hesitating trust in Providence, all the way up to such em-

bodiments of the fervors and exaltations of religious genius as Dinah in "Adam Bede," and the Rev. Mr. Lyon in "Felix Holt," and Mordecai in "Daniel Deronda." Indeed, if George Eliot be not what is technically styled "a believer," she is incomparably skilful in exhibiting the interior moods of all classes of believers. The phenomena of the spiritual world, as reported in the experience of saints and martyrs, she has studied with more intentness than the phenomena of the material world; and her great powers are never more conspicuous than when, concentrating the full force of her sympathetic imagination, she records with soul-awakening eloquence the ecstasies and the agonies of lofty spirits, touched, either in approval or reproof, by the spirit of God.

In presenting this wide variety of character, George Eliot employs two methods of characterization, each of which is good of its kind. In the majority of her humble personages, whose minds are necessarily restricted to a few ideas and experiences, the characters are represented as fixed, and the object is to make every act and word logically true to their strongly conceived individualities. Many critics consider these characters as her best, and loudly bewail her departure from that region of stagnant village life where she won her first laurels. But she also has the higher art of exhibiting character, not as grown, but as growing, and of indicating the most refined changes produced by external circumstances in the vital processes of its development. By the first method we are made

acquainted with persons whose limitations have been reached, and of whom we can only say that they *have* lived; by the second, we become expectant witnesses of the acts of persons whose limitations are yet undetermined, and of whom we can only say that they are intensely *living*. We know what the mother of Felix Holt is from the beginning; we cannot tell what Gwendolen will be until the end. Still, whether George Eliot portrays character as grown or as growing, she ever appears on the scene as a looker-on, pouring forth a stream of remarks, wittily wise or tenderly wise, and all tending to the moral that individual life is subject to the laws of life, and that ignorance, caprice, self-will, and revolt will have a hard time of it whenever they come into impotent conflict with the constitution of things. As an apparently disinterested observer of her own creations and of the progress of her own devised story, she impresses the cultivated reader with a never-ceasing wonder at the singular closeness, applicability, compactness, and fertility of her thinking, whenever an occasion is offered or is seized to insinuate it into the substance of the narrative. ✓

This tendency of her mind has reached its height in "Daniel Deronda," which so overflows with thoughts that an ordinary novel-reader, dazzled by the blaze which is intended to enlighten him, is tempted to complain that he is impeded rather than assisted by the subtle meditation which is brought in to reinforce clear representation. A reference to the greatest creator and delineator of human character that the world

has ever seen is always in point. Shakspeare is open to the objection, that, considered strictly from the point of view of the dramatist, he laid upon his characters a heavy burden of superfluous thought, which retarded the action of the play, and at the same time added nothing to our knowledge of the *dramatis personæ*. Whatever violation of the rules of dramatic art Shakspeare may have committed, and however superfluous much of his thinking may appear to dramatic critics, the great body of his readers could ill spare the undramatic thinking he so profusely poured into his dramas; but if we could imagine Shakspeare as a writer of novels after the modern pattern, it is easy to conjecture that he would have retrenched some of the maxims of general wisdom which he put into the mouths of his characters to be spoken from the stage, and used them in commenting on his personages and on the incidents in which they appeared. He also might have been his own critic. George Eliot is no Shakspeare; but her simple presentation of Daniel Deronda as a character who, like Hamlet, speaks and acts for himself without any side explanations from the author of his being, might give rise to much of the same kind of criticism which has been profusely expended on Hamlet. There are almost as many Hamlets as there are professors who endeavor, each on his own hypothesis, to reconcile the contradictions of Hamlet's character. But suppose that Shakspeare had himself annotated Hamlet as George Eliot has annotated Daniel Deronda?

Passing from this general consideration of George Eliot's genius to the work immediately under review, the first thing that strikes a careful reader is a certain clumsiness in its construction. Many of the misconceptions regarding the purpose of the book are due to the fact, that, in the two initial chapters, Gwendolen is at once introduced to us as glorying in her pride of beauty and in her power of domination, — a mood of mind which even the news of the financial ruin of her family does not materially alter. This is the method of all the great epics of literature, but it is unfortunate in the case of the present novel. Then follow eighteen explanatory chapters, giving the previous history of Gwendolen and Deronda up to the time they accidentally met at Leubronn, when the necklace which she had pawned was restored to her by this intruding stranger. A vital point in the story, — the fact that Deronda had rescued Mirah from suicide, had placed her with the Meyricks, had heard her pathetic narrative, and had been strangely impressed by such an entirely novel example of guileless maidenhood, before he saw Gwendolen at the gaming-table, — is a fact generally overlooked by readers, owing to the method which the author has adopted of beginning her novel, as it were, in the middle. George Eliot is understood to be a writer who never reads any reviews of her books, and undertakes the task of being her own critic. We think that, on the whole, she is her best critic. In the explanatory headings of many of her chapters, intended to give



the clew to her meaning, she imitates very happily the quaint, stately, and picturesque diction of English prose-writers, two centuries or two centuries and a half old, reproducing the style of Hooker or Burton or Sir Thomas Browne as felicitously as Scott reproduced the style of the Elizabethan dramatists in his frequent quotations from an imaginary "Old Play." But the starched sentences placed at the head of the first chapter of "Daniel Deronda," the object of which is to explain why she does not begin at the natural beginning of the story, are pedantic and heavy, giving no adequate idea of her usual skill in this kind of imitation. She certainly had at hand, in Spenser's letter to Raleigh, expounding the design of the "Faërie Queene," a sentence pat to her purpose. A historiographer, says Spenser, "discourseth of affairs orderly, as they were done, accounting as well the times as the actions; but *a poet thrusteth into the midst* even where it most concerneth him, and there recouring to things forepast, and divining of things to come, maketh a pleasing analysis of all." In addition to the ingenious and elaborate obscurity of the heading of the first chapter, the first sentence in the chapter itself contains a word which seemed to most novel-readers portentously scientific, and which has enabled gentle dulness to indulge in many a feeble joke. "What," the author asks in reference to Gwendolen, — "what was the secret of form or expression which gave the *dynamic* quality to her glance?" If the mild scoffers at this terrible word will intermit

their innocently malicious giggling for a few minutes, and turn to their dictionaries for the information they so evidently need, they will not only ascertain the meaning of "dynamic," but understand why the term is specially applicable to the genius of the author who sees fit to use it.

Casting aside such obvious objections to "Daniel Deronda," and coming directly to the question whether the novel indicates a decline in George Eliot's power of creating character, and of vividly imagining scenes and incidents in which character finds adequate expression, we are inclined to think that it shows a palpable advance on her previous works. Of course it is hopeless to argue against those who consider her genius limited to the representation of the rustic English life pictured in "Silas Marner," or the provincial town life so delightfully portrayed in "Middlemarch." Such persons are so confirmed in their just admiration of these, that they resent her abandoning the secure field which she has made her own for the new regions which she seems ambitious to occupy. They are not affected by the argument that the author may naturally be reluctant to go on repeating herself. Indeed, they have something of the feeling of the boy, who, having taken an extravagant liking for one juvenile story, insisted that his uncles, aunts, and cousins, if they desired to make him a present of a book, should select that particular tale, because, he said, he *knew* that to be good, and was uncertain as to the interest of any others. The result was that

he had a dozen copies of the story he prized. But the hopeful sign in "Daniel Deronda" is, that the range of George Eliot's genius has not yet reached its term; that her vigorous faculties show no symptoms of decay in their present exercise on new phases of human life and human character; that the power which delighted us in her previous novels is independent of circumstance and locality; and that she will hereafter produce works as different from "Daniel Deronda" as "Daniel Deronda" is from "Adam Bede."

The special admirers of George Eliot, those who think her genius is confined to the reproduction in vivid forms of the rustic life of that portion of England in which she happened to pass her youth, must admit that in the present work she has shown almost equal power in depicting the life of the gentry and of the upper middle classes of provincial England. The general tone of the society is finely indicated, while every individual in it is distinguished from the rest by some subtle stroke of characterization. In the first book, Mrs. Davilow and her daughters, Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne, Rex Gascoigne, Anna Gascoigne, the Arrowpoints, Lord Brackinshaw, are made as well known to the reader as to Gwendolen the heroine. Passing to the city, what an image of domestic life is presented in the household of Mrs. Meyrick and her daughters! Some readers may be intolerant of Mordecai the Jew; but nobody can fail to enjoy the exquisite humor exhibited in delineating the Jewish family of the Cohens, including Cohen himself, his

wife, his mother, his astonishing little son Jacob, and his hardly less astonishing little daughter Adelaide Rebekah. Sir Hugo Mallinger and Lady Mallinger, Mr. Bult, Mr. Vandernoodt, Mr. Lush, not to mention others who move more or less in what is called London society, are as real as any persons we daily meet in the street. The perfection of characterization in all these persons, whether they are honest or dishonest, is unmarred by a single touch of caricature. The representation is bold and distinct; but no temptation of wit or humor, no impulse of sympathy or antipathy, is allowed to exaggerate or obscure a single trait of their natures; and the mirror the author holds up to them reflects their mental and moral lineaments so exactly that each of them would, in a moment of pleased or vexed surprise, wonderingly admit the accuracy of the likeness.

Should we, therefore, confine our attention merely to such persons as we have named, the book might properly be considered a remarkable one; for characterization of such nicety, fairness, truth, and strength is an exceptional gift, and a more exceptional virtue, among the novelists of the time. But in this praise we have not touched the heart of the book, or named the characters which should justly give it a prominent position among the great novels of the century. Still, let us first quote a few examples of George Eliot's power in describing, characterizing, and satirizing some of the aspects of English life. The opening chapter of the book places us as spectators in one of



the fashionable gambling-hells of Germany, — “one of those splendid resorts which the enlightenment of ages has prepared” for this species of pleasure “at a heavy cost of gilt mouldings, dark-toned color, and chubby nudities, all correspondingly heavy, — forming a suitable condenser for human breath belonging in great part to the highest fashion, and not easily procurable to be breathed in elsewhere in the like proportion, at least by persons of little fashion.” Can anything exceed the penetrating force of this satire? The foul air of the gambling-room, which makes those who breathe it physically sick, has still the grand recommendation of being the condensation of all the breaths of all the people of fashion therein congregated, and therefore gives a kind of gentility to every plebeian who has the good fortune to inhale it. Again, how many persons are hit in this description of Mr. Vander-noodt, a diner-out welcome in every society: “He was an industrious gleaner of personal details, and could probably tell everything about a great philosopher or physicist except his theories or discoveries.” As to scholarship, this gentleman professes his contempt for those “Dryasdust fellows who get a reputation by raking up some small scandal about Semiramis or Nitocris. . . . I like to know the manners of my time, — contemporary gossip, not antediluvian. . . . I don’t care a straw about the *faux pas* of the mummies.” The picture of the Meyrick family is probably as felicitous as anything that the author has ever done in what some people deem her limited sphere of charac-



terization. Both the reality and the loveliness of the mother and her daughters are so startlingly true that we can hardly resist the impression, as we read, that they are among our valued personal friends and acquaintances. The account of their reception of Mirah, when Deronda, after rescuing her from suicide, brings her to their perfect home, and the scene in which Herr Klesmer appears to pass judgment on Mirah's musical capacity, are admirable illustrations of the writer's power of giving lifelike reality to what she sympathetically depicts. It is odd that such a mother—shrewd, kind-hearted, and practical—should have for a son such an eccentric, tempestuous, and scatterbrained personage as Hans Meyrick, — an artist of “irregular” genius, subject to fits of incalculable caprice, yet commonly held within bounds by his affectionateness, and distinguished from the Bohemian of Balzac by a restraining British constitution of nature. He is one of the most marked among the minor characters of the novel, radiant in humor and good-humor, and never knowing what he will say or do a moment beforehand. Deronda objects to Agrippa's legs, in one of his historical pictures. Hans replies that they are good realistically. “But they are impossible legs,” urges Deronda. “Then,” Hans retorts, “they are good ideally. Agrippa's legs were possibly bad; I idealize that, and make them impossibly bad. Art, my Eugenius, must intensify.” It is hopeless to caution him against the effects of his sudden impulses. “Since,” he says, “I got into the scrape of being born, every-

thing I have liked best has been a scrape for myself or for somebody else. My painting is the last scrape; and I shall be all my life getting out of it." When Deronda assures him that Mirah can, under no conceivable circumstances, marry him, the half-grave, half-merry egotist is not a bit abashed. "I go," he declares, "to science and philosophy for my romance. Nature designed Mirah to fall in love with me. The amalgamation of races demands it, the mitigation of human ugliness demands it, the affinity of contrasts assures it. I am the utmost contrast to Mirah,—a bleached Christian, who can't sing two notes in tune. Who has a chance against me?"

A character almost as picturesque as Hans is Herr Klesmer, "a felicitous combination of the German, the Slave, and the Semite, with grand features, brown hair floating in artistic fashion, and brown eyes in spectacles,"—one of those forcible men who hold their right rank in well-dressed, well-bred conventional society, though their clothes never fit them, and though their manners have a brusqueness which is ever in danger of violating the conventional rules of good-breeding. As an artist who has identified himself with his art, his imperiousness of demeanor and emphasis of speech seem to spring from his feeling of the dignity of the art he represents, rather than from any arrogance of personal disposition. In all matters regarding music he speaks with that dogmatism which is based on certain knowledge; what Mrs. Gamp calls "the torters of the Imposition"

could not wring from him a polite compliment to a mediocre performance; and Gwendolen's beauty, on his first introduction to her, only forced from his gallantry the equivocal praise, "It is always acceptable to *see* you sing!" Nothing can be better than his retort on Mr. Bult,—the "political platitudinarian," whose "monumental obtuseness" he hated as the awkward mimicry of the dignity of a gentleman,—when that wooden politician patronizingly informed him that he was sure he had too much talent to be "a mere musician." "No man," replied Klesmer, "has too much talent to be a musician. Most men have too little. A creative artist is no more a mere musician than a great statesman is a mere politician. We are not ingenious puppets, sir, who live in a box and look out on the world only when it is gaping for amusement. We help to rule the nations and make the age as much as any other public man. We count ourselves on level benches with legislators; and a man who speaks effectively through music is compelled to something more difficult than 'parliamentary eloquence.'" Mr. Bult's only resource is to turn to Miss Arrowpoint, and with undiminished gravity to remark, "Your pianist does not think small beer of himself." But the great musician's whole soul comes out only in his interview with Gwendolen, when she desires to learn his judgment as to her capacity to succeed in public as an actress and singer. The emotions which are stirred during the conversation give all the more emphasis to the thoughts which it elicits.

The interview is strictly an event in the progress of the story, for Gwendolen's fate depends on Herr Klesmer's decision; but the principles of art announced in it apply to hundreds of other cases, which resemble Gwendolen's only in the one particular need of converting a means of elegant amusement into a source of income. Fortune enables a great number of young women to acquire sufficient training in music to sing and play acceptably in drawing-rooms, and sufficient training in elocution to win applause in private theatricals; and when a reverse of fortune occurs they are commonly smitten with Gwendolen's ambition to be singers in public concert-rooms and actresses on the public stage. It seems to them easy to win applause from the sensitive, vulgar public, after the fastidious critics of the drawing-room, persons notoriously existing in a constant state of semi-boredom, have condescended to confess, in that fashionable drawl which is the happiest of all developments from the imbecility of the baby's drool, that they have been quickened and inspired by what they have listlessly seen or yawningly heard. But the moment the public is faced, the amateur is made cruelly conscious of the difference between the criticism of parlors and the criticism of theatres. The very persons who would have considered an invitation to the private entertainment as a compliment deserving of any number of compliments in return, become the bitterest critics of the public exhibition; and those fashionable friends who delighted in the performances of the opulent



amateur are not wont to buy tickets for the "benefit" night of the unsuccessful actress. Herr Klesmer unveils to Gwendolen the austere facts of the profession which her self-confidence impels her to choose as a means of recovering fortune. "The gods," he declares, "have a curse for him who willingly tells another the wrong road;" and then, full of remorseful pity and tenderness for the beautiful creature whose expectations he must disappoint, he proceeds to unfold those inexorable laws by which alone success in any of the fine arts can be attained. In the course of a hurried conversation, broken now by pauses and now by outbursts of passion, a true philosophy of art is evolved. That conversation, indeed, is a text-book for all amateurs who aspire to be artists; and if diligently studied it will serve both as a guard against the delusions of self-esteem, and as a guide in the paths which lead to excellence.

It would be easy to go on enumerating the minor details of incident, character, and reflection which contribute to make the appearance of this book a literary event. But there are four characters which stand out from the rest with such a stamp of power and originality on them, that they impress the least thoughtful reader as altogether beyond the ken and grasp even of such novelists as Dickens and Thackeray. These are Gwendolen Harleth, Daniel Deronda, Mirah, and Mordecai.

Gwendolen is a masterpiece of characterization. The conception, delineation, and development of this



specimen of haughty maidenhood are alike admirable. Many novelists create characters ; but few, like George Eliot, create souls as well as characters. And the soul which she creates, embodies, and calls by the name of Gwendolen Harleth, she also constantly watches, so that the reader is allowed to note all that throng of interior emotions, thoughts, volitions, and events which precede outward acts, whether the acts be comparatively unimportant or absolutely momentous. As the beholder as well as creator of this soul, she never seems to lose sight of it, either by day in its conscious feeling and thinking, or by night in its vague fears and perturbing dreams. The scrutiny is as relentless as that of a naturalist who has a jelly-fish under his microscope, and as tenderly considerate as that of a mother who holds her new-born babe in her arms. While freely handling this palpitating mass of spiritual life, her touch is so delicate as never to inflict a bruise. And during all the time that the soul is subjected to this intense imaginative observation and analysis, the bodily presence animated by the soul is as vividly apparent to the external eye as is the invisible, mysterious essence within it to the eye of the mind. This is assuredly masterly characterization ; but the statement still does not cover the whole ground. Gwendolen is not only thus made spiritually and physically alive, but the outlying social and spiritual laws she obeys or violates are discerned with the same sureness of insight which penetrates into the depths and records all the changes of her individual being.

It is an indication of George Eliot's skill that from the first she connects Gwendolen's self-assertion and self-confidence with perfect bodily health. Nature teaches humility by deranging digestion as well as by heaping up impediments to the schemes of pride; in both cases humility comes from the perception that the inward power is weak before the outward obstacle. But up to the time that a banker's knavery had made wreck of her mother's fortune, Gwendolen had encountered nothing that was stronger than her own determination; exulting in her health, her beauty, and her inborn instinct of commanding, possessing "a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear, unhesitating tones," with "a certain unusualness about her" which acted with the effect of a potent charm, and giving to petty objects, surveyed from her heights of self-exaltation, a kind of "hazy largeness," she reduced all persons in immediate relations with her to the position of confessed inferiors. Her meek governess predicted that she would never rest until she had brought the world to her feet; her mother, whom she caressed and tormented by turns, always appeared before her "in an apologetic state of mind for the evils brought on her by her step-father;" her half-sisters were compelled to be satisfied when they excited her contempt in a milder form than was common. As to the great mass of human beings, she did not, like Grandcourt, call them beasts, but she was determined not to be sacrificed "to creatures worth less than herself," to

make "the very best of the chances that life offered her, and conquer difficulties by her exceptional cleverness." Her ideal "was to be daring in speech and reckless in braving dangers;" but beneath this autocracy of disposition there was a furtive spiritual element, which, though inefficacious as a spiritual restraint, occasionally surprised her by betraying her superstitious liability to fits of spiritual dread. On her first day at Offendene, when her spirit of maidenly domination was at the highest, her little sister Isabel happened to open a hinged panel in the wainscot of one of the rooms, and revealed a picture of "an upturned dead face, from which an obscure figure seemed to be fleeing with outstretched arms." For a moment she shuddered with an unspeakable horror, the vague spiritual dread at the heart of her being shooting suddenly up, through layer after layer of pride and self-complacency, to affright her with a prophetic glimpse of the upturned face of her future detested husband, struggling with death in the harbor of Genoa, and she, the obscure figure of the picture, fleeing in thought from any sympathy with his desperate attempts to regain the boat.

The transitory emotion, however, passes rapidly away; and she proceeds in her career with a supreme confidence in her courage and in her sense of superiority. As a high-spirited maiden, untouched by love, and too full of exulting health to be contaminated by sentimentality, she graciously receives the admiration and adoration of men so long as they keep

at a respectful distance ; but when her cousin, Rex Gascoigne, makes love to her in earnest, and presumes to take and press her hand with the imploring eagerness of a feeling which she does not share, she becomes a mountain of ice, freezing him to the heart's core. "Pray don't make love to me," she exclaims ; "I hate it!" She feels a maiden's horror at the slightest profanation of her person. She cannot endure the thought that her hand or lip should be passionately touched by a man who has not succeeded in taking possession of her soul. After rejecting Rex, she puts her arms round her mother's neck with "an almost painful clinging ;" sobs, cries, protests that she can't love people, but on the contrary hates them, and ends by declaring, "I can't bear any one to be very near me but you." The emotion is doubtless to be referred to a kind of remorse. She knows that out of mere pride of domination, and of delight in seeing her admirers reduced to the position of slaves to her caprice, she has lured her obedient friend and servant Rex Gascoigne to the point of declaring his love. She breaks his heart as cruelly as the most hardened coquette could have done ; and yet she regrets that she has made him miserable. Still, the feeling that prompts her resentment of his familiarity is purely maidenly, and is, indeed, the instinctive defence of women against the first approaches of men to establish a more intimate relation with them than that of friend. It is better that the hearts of men should be broken — easily mended as experience proves them to



be — than that the girl-woman should sanction the least liberties taken by that importunate affection which is too eager to ask the question whether it be reciprocated.

It is characteristic of Gwendolen, that, never having felt the attraction of love, she should be pleased by the sobriety and reserve of Grandcourt, who conducts his courtship in the grand style, without any of those disagreeable incidents of kneeling, kissing, and fondling which attend the sentimental style of wooing. In Grandcourt's suit her ambition is reconciled with her girlish feeling; for this rich landed gentleman never pesters her with any of the preposterous outbreaks of emotion which mark the attentions of a lover whose heart flashes forth in every act and word. The courtship seems to be proceeding happily on the way to marriage, when Gwendolen's pride is stung and her conscience wounded by the apparition of Mrs. Glasher and her children, — revealing to her the fact that she is on the point of connecting her fresh vitality with an outworn life, full of "backward secrets," and respectful to her, not from the restrained fervor of an ardent love, but from the mere exhaustion resulting from a previous passionate experience. She flies from him with a mingled feeling of terror and disgust. At the gambling-table at Leubronn she first comes under the notice of Deronda, who is sufficiently interested in her "dynamic glance" to return the necklace she has pawned. She is recalled to England by the news of her mother's loss of fortune. Her



confidence in her power to conquer circumstances and to make life what she wills and wishes it to be, is not dashed by this calamity. She resents the idea of descending to the office of being a teacher in a school, or of becoming a governess ; she aspires to be a singer and an actress, compelling applause from the public as she has compelled it in every private circle in which she has appeared. Herr Klesmer, with cruel kindness, demonstrates to her the impossibility of success in that direction of her talents. Baffled on every side where she thinks to make her will efficient, she at last commits the crime of marrying Grandcourt, with the feeling that his will must yield to hers, and that she can serve Mrs. Glasher and do justice to Grandcourt's children, while she at the same time carries out her own dream of dominating every society in which she appears. A month of married life proves to her that her girlish, petulant imperiousness is no match for the persisting will of her husband,—a will that has the quality of a crab or a boa-constrictor, which goes on relentlessly “pinching or crushing” without the slightest regard to the active or passive resistance of its victim. “Any romantic illusions she had in marrying this man had turned on her power of using him as she liked. He was using her as he liked.”

Grandcourt is one of that detestable class of human beings, instinctively hated by all good men who regard the rights and feelings of others, and by all bad men in whom depravity has not extinguished

every generous instinct of human nature. He is just the person who if he were encountered on our Western plains by the wild, semi-savage freebooters who give the law to that region, would be very properly selected as a person to be "shot at sight." In civilized society, and in civilized society alone, could such a sneering, selfish, cynical, and cruel specimen of aristocratic insolence be tolerated. He looks upon all members of the human race outside of his immediate associates as simply brutes; even the persons he necessarily meets when residing at one of his country-houses, he drawlingly designates as "rather a ragged lot;" and the experience of vice, having destroyed whatever of soul he may have originally possessed, has left him with the exterior manners of a conventional gentleman, with a conventional gentleman's supreme disdain for all creatures who do not belong to his set, and with a conventional gentleman's continual and unlimited liability to be bored. Morally isolated from his race, and selfish to the inmost core of his being, his will grows doggedly strong as fast as his human sympathies contract; and he deliberately brings his will to bear on Gwendolen for the purpose of slowly crushing out of her all soul and individuality. His parasite, Mr. Thomas Cranmer Lush, contemptuously recognized by Sir Hugo Mallinger as a kind of "half caste among gentlemen," happens to be the object of her special aversion, and this is considered a sufficient reason to employ him in the business of tormenting and insulting her into abject

submission. The natural result is, that she hates her husband mortally ; but she fears as well as hates him. In her misery she seeks some moral support. She finds it in Deronda.

Daniel Deronda appears to us one of the noblest and most original characters among the heroes imagined by poets, dramatists, and novelists. His relation to Gwendolen is one fertile in immoral possibilities. "You are a dangerous young fellow," says Sir Hugo Mallinger to him,—"a kind of Lovelace who will make all the Clarissas run after you, instead of your running after them." Indeed, the situation is exactly that which French novelists have delighted to represent ; and it is easy to understand how it would have been treated by novelists of such widely differing characters and genius as Honoré de Balzac, George Sand, Jules Sandeau, Théophile Gautier, Prosper Mérimée, Alexandre Dumas, and Charles de Bernard. They would all have agreed in lowering the moral standard both of Gwendolen and Deronda ; they would have made the sensuous elements in their natures gain the ascendancy over the spiritual, in the complications of duty and passion which the polite pitilessness, the ceremonious brutality of Grandcourt would have constantly multiplied,—and the result would have been an inculcation of the rights of passion in a highly wrought tale of guilt and ruin, in which every step in the downward path would have been indicated with marvellous precision, and subjected to the most refined processes of psychological analysis. George

Eliot pursues a different method because she of all novelists penetrates with most certainty of insight through the hollowness of all theories of the rights of passion, and most firmly grasps the central idea of duty which underlies all reasonable and moral life. Deronda, when he discovers that he has unconsciously established a spiritual mastery over the soul of Gwen-dolen, and that she looks up to him as the one person she has met in life before whom her pride and ambition are abashed, is placed in a position more delicate than that of a Jesuit priest before a distressed beauty. He is really her father confessor, from whom she hardly dares to expect absolution, but whose aid she still pathetically implores. Acting from the instinct of one of that rare class of gentlemen who have been aptly styled "God Almighty's gentlemen," he comes to her, not after the French fashion, — as a half-conscious, half-unconscious seducer, — but as a respectful, magnanimous friend and helper, tenderly, wisely, even austere, giving her such aid and counsel as it is in his power to bestow. It has been objected that he offers to her only the commonplaces of consolation, and directs her to use only commonplace means of resisting the hard conditions of her fate. This objection overlooks the fact that truisms are vitalized into truths when uttered from his lips; that these truths have been inwrought into the substance of his character; that purity of heart and justness of judgment have in him been organized into powers; and that neither his heart nor his intellect can be imposed

upon by any of the grand French fallacies of passion, which, if followed out, could only rescue her from her present degradation by plunging her into a degradation worse than that she now experienced. In short, he influences her by the magnetism of his character rather than by the agreeableness of his opinions; and the proud creature, reduced to an ignominious vassalage by her detested husband, receives Deronda's practical precepts with a pathetic humility. He is her outward conscience, and sees clearly into her moral condition from the first. "Strange and piteous," he says, "to think what a centre of wretchedness a delicate piece of human flesh like that might be, wrapped round with fine raiment, her ears pierced for gems, her head held loftily, her mouth all smiling pretence, the poor soul within her sitting in sick distaste of all things!" What was the experience and the discipline which thus made him a discernor and consoler of souls?

George Eliot gives the answer to this question in every mode that a novelist can adopt, — by description, by analysis, by reflection, by the direct presentation of Deronda in scenes of intense dramatic interest. The essential fact is this, — that Deronda differs from other heroes of romance in being a man of comprehensive intellect as well as of comprehensive sympathies. There is, however, a doubt as to his birth, which, while it increases his toleration of other individualities, infuses into his nature a subtle melancholy which somewhat impairs the resolute exercise of his will. Still, the essential excellence of



his nature is in his quiet abandonment of that element of self-assertion which enables most forcible persons, indifferent to the rights and interests of others, to obtain the prizes of life. His special peculiarity consists in taking the point of view of all persons with whom he comes in contact or collision, and in his disposition to surrender his own claims to theirs. Such a person must be considered a strange phenomenon in romance; for in romance the reader instinctively sympathizes with the hero who dominates other individualities by the superior force of his own personality. In literature the most remarkable instance of this combination of intellectual grasp with intellectual modesty and charity is found in Shakspeare. That this disposition of mind deserves to be classed among the highest and most difficult of all virtues is shown by the example of him who, nailed to the cross, in the utmost stress of mortal agony still recognized the natural prejudices of his tormentors in his prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they *know* not what they do." Towards this highest ideal of moral and intellectual manliness Deronda was obscurely striving from his youth upwards. Self-sacrifice for others was combined in him with a . compassionate, intuitive knowledge of the egotisms, of the sufferings, of the wrongs of others; but while he thus admitted every claim on his sympathy, he was in danger of losing that impulse of moral wrath at wrong-doing which is the general condition of efficiency in the work of well-doing. Deronda, how-

ever, has his critics constantly by him in the persons of his warmest friends. When at college he gives up his own chances in order to aid Hans Meyrick in obtaining a much-needed scholarship, Sir Hugo Malinger tells him: "My dear boy, it is good to be unselfish and generous; but don't carry that too far. It will not do to give yourself to be melted down for the benefit of the tallow-trade; you must know where to find yourself." Even Hans Meyrick warns him against a disposition he has to take even "an antediluvian point of view, lest he should do injustice to the megatherium." This comprehensiveness of sympathy and intelligence makes him the most charitable and the most helpful of friends; but it leaves him without a definite aim in life. That aim is supplied by his love for Mirah, the fascination exerted over him by Mordecai's eloquence, and by the discovery of his own Jewish descent. It is difficult to conceive how such a character, so elaborately analyzed and represented by George Eliot, could have found an object which would have concentrated its energies in any of the ambitions presented by ordinary English life. By his nature he is bound to devote himself to some grand, unselfish cause, where a kind of Shakspearian toleration for the infirmities of individuals is to be combined with a hero's purpose to overcome seemingly hopeless obstacles, and a martyr's vision of the grandeur of the ultimate object which it is the hero's purpose to realize. It happens, as it were by accident, that his latent capacity for self-consecration is

directed to the re-establishment of the Jewish nation. He had become keenly aware that his "too reflective and diffusive sympathy" was impairing his power of will, and he longed "for some external event or some inward light that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy." In the path of duty he selected, the author has been careful to surround him with disgusts and dissuasives such as all ideal reformers, all champions of an overmastering idea, have to overcome. The Jewish family of the Cohens, so far as they are representative, make his grand project apparently hopeless; and Sir Hugo Mallinger is at hand with his sound common-sense to expose what he deems the illusions of the sense which is uncommon. "I have long expected," he says, "something remarkable from you, Dan; but for God's sake don't go into any eccentricities! I can tolerate any man's difference of opinion, but let him tell it me without getting himself up as a lunatic. At this stage of the world, if a man wants to be taken seriously he must keep clear of melodrama. . . . You have a passion for people who are pelted, Dan. I'm sorry for them too; but so far as company goes, it's a bad ground of selection." Such ugly facts as the Cohen family, and such sensible arguments as those of Sir Hugo, have always been vainly presented to minds like Deronda's; and human progress is in some way connected with the refusal of elevated spirits to admit the validity of such facts and arguments.

The commanding influence which raises Deronda from a comprehensive thinker on human life to an earnest enthusiast is found in the character and speech of Mordecai. On this character George Eliot has lavished her utmost skill in conceiving, presenting, and vitalizing religious phenomena. She portrays this consumptive prophet in all the external shabbiness of his plebeian condition, clad in mean clothes, working in a common handicraft, coughing, gasping, choking, as his feeble frame gives scant utterance to the on-rush of his burning words, stretching forth his yellow skeleton hands in passionate supplication, and his "dark-haired eager Jewish face" illuminated with a holy passion which might befit an Isaiah or Ezekiel. Whatever may be thought of him, it is certain that in no previous English novel has such an example of religious genius been introduced with such startling effect. He may be contemptuously dismissed as a person unwarrantably intruded into a romance; shallow readers may be offended at such an apparition being thrust forward among the Grandcourts, Gwendolens, Lushes, Meyricks, and Mallingers of English life: but the fact still remains that all who really appreciate the highest qualities of George Eliot's genius must be particularly impressed by this wonderful delineation. It is even better and nobler than that of Savonarola as presented in "*Romola*." The loftiest sympathies of the writer's soul are combined with her finest powers of reason and imagination, in the attempt to lift Mordecai to an

ideal prominence above the other personages of the book,—a book which is peculiar among novels for the breadth of the view it takes of human life and human character. She endows him with the Hebraic fervor of imagination and intensity of will, while she emancipates him from the Hebraic narrowness of view; and she pours into his passionate speech an Hebraic eloquence unexampled in English literature since the utterances of the Hebrew prophets were first translated into our English tongue. Mordecai is one of those enthusiasts who believe that in the spiritual universe soul answers to soul, and that influence is almost independent of language. “Why,” asks Deronda, “did you write in Hebrew?” “I had,” replies Mordecai, “the ranks of the great dead around me; *the martyrs gathered and listened.*” But the dreadful test to which his enthusiasm was subjected he found in the inattention of his own race. To write in English, he says, from that “breath of divine thought which is within me, would excite men to smile at it, and to say, ‘A poor Jew!’ and *the chief smilers would be my own people.*” The pathos of this is indescribably deep. It bears a faint resemblance to the chill of heart which a thoroughgoing New England Abolitionist of the old type might have experienced when he found numbers of free negroes in the Northern States despising their enslaved brethren in the States of the South. Reformers who are captivated by an ideal must expect to meet with opposition from many members of the contemned and degraded



race they ardently desire to serve. Mordecai feels the opposition all the more keenly because his physical life is daily decaying, while his unrecognized ideas are daily becoming more clear to his soul. In this condition of spiritual loneliness he foresees and welcomes the friendship of Deronda. Upon this fresh, pure life, capable of efforts which are impossible to him, he relies with unalterable trust. He dies content when he is assured that Deronda has become the heir of his ideas, and will devote all the energies of his noble heart and all the resources of his large intellect to the attempt to realize them.

Mirah is commonly voted by critics to be an insipid specimen of feminine excellence. If this be true, it is because the author has failed in conveying to other minds the conception which evidently filled and delighted her own, and has only succeeded in representing a childish nature when she intended to represent a childlike one. Mirah appears to us an exquisite creation, endowed with a simplicity of character which is as forcible as it is simple. An artless Jewish maiden of genius; bearing in her blood and soul the fine results of the inherited instincts and ideas due to a hundred generations of culture; with the artistic sense developed in her to its last perfection, though it is limited in respect to artistic power; fervidly attached to her religion because "it was of one fibre with her affections, and had never presented itself to her as a set of propositions," and also because it was the religion of her mother, whose memory she adores

and whose spiritual presence she constantly feels ; a thoroughly natural, genuine, and guileless creature, fleeing from evil with an instinctive abhorrence, and relying on good, when she meets it, with an instinctive trust, — she would be proof against the charge of being insipid were it only for one characteristic which is always found associated with power ; namely, the identity in her nature of conscience and sensibility with will, so that every monition of duty or prompting of affection is followed by its appropriate act. Her virgin ingenuousness stands every test and trial ; the sharpest scrutiny cannot detect in her the slightest proclivity to falsehood ; and the quaint, odd way she has of unexpectedly flashing her sincerities of feeling on the attention of those who are more experienced than herself, lends piquancy and fascination to her ebullient but resolute innocence. Deronda passes unconsciously from the position of a protector to that of a lover ; and this change is shown with consummate skill, both in subtile psychological analysis of the moods and needs of these mated souls, and in picturing scenes where their characters have full opportunities for complete self-expression. It is to be added that in this novel the softening sensuous elements which enter into the complex passion of love are omitted, in respect both to the attraction which draws Deronda to Mirah and in that which draws Gwendolen to Deronda.

George Eliot has anticipated and answered in the book itself most of the criticisms which have been

made upon it since its publication. The criticisms of it in the most prominent organs of literary opinion seem to be written by Sir Hugo Mallinger, or Grandcourt, or even by Thomas Cranmer Lush; but there is nothing said against the leading character which is not more felicitously said by those personages in the book itself. The chief defect in the story is that it suddenly stops rather than artistically ends. The conclusion is meagre, and bears the marks of having been hurried up. There is a remote possibility that the author intends to follow the precedents of Thackeray and Anthony Trollope, and introduce in her next novel some of the leading characters whose fortunes are left undetermined in the present. In that case we shall be informed whether or not Rex Gascoigne eventually marries Gwendolen, and how it fares with Deronda and Mirah in their mission to the East. Still, the conclusion of "Felix Holt" and "Middlemarch" is as unsatisfactory as that of "Daniel Deronda;" in respect to each, the words "To be Continued" would seem proper substitutes for "Finis." But it appears to be the fate of this remarkable novelist to raise expectation to the height only more or less to disappoint it, and to give an absorbing interest to characters whom she abruptly leaves, without condescending to gratify that natural curiosity in readers which she has labored so successfully to excite.

## GEORGE ELIOT'S PRIVATE LIFE.

AFTER reading for the third or fourth time "George Eliot's Life, as Related in her Letters and Journals," arranged and edited by her second husband, J. W. Cross, our first favorable impression of Mr. Cross has deepened with each fresh examination of his work. In no other biography of the kind is there such a complete self-effacement of the biographer in the subject of his biography. He presents his wife as she lived and labored in her high calling, but he intrudes himself simply to connect the letters and journals into something like a consistent narrative. The reader constantly complains that he has not made his own contributions to the book more voluminous and more luminous. He tells us little or nothing of some matters which he must have thoroughly known, and which he must have felt that his readers ached to know. All the mysteries of George Eliot's life are left unexplained, or only partially explained. His only aim seems to have been to make his work an autobiography, compiled from the letters and journals of his wife. With exasperating modesty and diffidence he declines to venture an opinion on some matters as to which the admirers of George

Eliot are divided in opinion. He evidently adores his wife, thinks that what she says in defence of her conduct is a final judgment which no courts in Christendom can overrule, and only appears to state the conditions under which a letter was written, disappearing the moment the information is given. Indeed, so far as Mr. Cross enters into this autobiography of George Eliot he leaves the impression of a somewhat shy gentleman, but still a gentleman of unmistakable honor, intelligence, and integrity. If any faults are to be found in his editorial labors, they are faults of omission and not of commission.

If any admirer of George Eliot's writings expected to find in these volumes much which would throw new light on the genesis and processes of her genius, he is doomed to disappointment. The letters are genuine letters, without a trace of insincerity or affectation; but they chronicle her maladies much more than they reveal the method of her creations. The pangs of childbirth are usually considered the most dreadful physical torments entailed on women for the sin or indiscretion of Eve. In reading this biography we are made to believe that they are slight in comparison with the pangs of bookbirth. A third, at least, of her letters and journals is taken up with distressing accounts of her attacks of headache, dyspepsia, rheumatism, and other miseries connected with a frail and infirm bodily constitution. Throughout the work one gets the general impression that he is following, week after week, month after month, the life



of an invalid. She hardly seems competent at any time to produce the great works of genius which bear her name. Her spiritual health, when we recur to her novels, seems strangely at variance with the almost constant physical ill health which she ruefully records in her letters. We can hardly recall another instance of a mind so strong, broad, hardy, beautiful, heroic, and creative, lodged in a body so ill adapted to house such a spiritual guest. Thus in a letter written when she was twenty-one years old, she says she cannot "attack Mrs. Somerville's connection of the Physical Sciences" until she has applied four leeches to her suffering head. It was the noble soul in the weak frame that burst through all these obstructions and overcame all these difficulties. As the world goes, she might, like her weak sisters in invalidism, have been justified in leading the life of an effortless valetudinarian, fearful every moment that activity of any kind would bring back her headaches, and plaintively demanding of the healthier members of her family a constant attention to her wants and her whims. It is frightful to think how many inmates of otherwise happy households are cursed by the care they have to bestow on some sick, sensitive, and selfish relative, who commonly contrives to survive them all.

When we say, however, that the correspondence of George Eliot dwells too much on her constantly recurring bodily troubles, we do not mean that her letters, taken as a whole, are not remarkable specimens

of epistolary composition; for they are full of keen observation, weighty thoughts, penetrating glances into the problems of human life, and descriptions of scenery which are as notable for their accuracy as for their vividness and power. When she first appeared as a novelist she was about thirty-seven years old. We remember that after reading the first chapters of "Scenes of Clerical Life," published in "Blackwood's Magazine," we were both charmed and puzzled,—charmed by the style, and puzzled as to whom among living celebrities could the authorship be ascribed; for the writer was evidently a great master of English prose, and his sentences had the last grace of good prose,—that of exquisite rhythm. No novice could have written "Amos Barton," for on every page was the evidence that it proceeded from the mind of a person long practised in the art of forcing language to convey thought and feeling with perfect exactness, and at the same time with perfect ease and freedom. The private letters and journals now published show that George Eliot was a great prose writer, in her correspondence with intimate friends, long before the "Scenes of Clerical Life" were dreamed of; yet hardly one of these friends discovered that she was the George Eliot who was talked about in all literary circles, until she confided the fact to such persons as she thought would keep the secret as long as it could be kept from the public.

It is hardly necessary to dwell at length on the first period of her life. She was the child of a thoroughly

practical and a thoroughly honest man of the English middle class, but at the same time a man limited in his conceptions to what are called Tory notions in Church and State. Caleb Garth in "Middlemarch" is an idealized, yet substantially truthful representation of her father. To this father she was literally true to the death. She was the only genius born in the family. Her brothers and sisters doubtless grew up to be admirable specimens of the average virtue and intelligence of the middle classes of Great Britain. They belonged to what Abraham Lincoln called "the plain people," — the people who, in England as in the United States, have done the work which has aided the slow progress of that real civilization which is gradually lifting the lower and dependent classes into a higher rank among the forces that control the politics of the few nations on the globe which have arrived at the dignity of being ruled by constitutional governments. But the one daughter of this excellent family in whose career we are especially interested was a thinker from her childhood, and at the same time the most affectionate of human beings. She could not as a girl live without love, and could not accept an opinion or a creed which she had not verified by her own vital experience, whether the experience came from the exercise of her reason or from the feelings of her heart. As she grew up into womanhood she was overcome by the emotional side of evangelical Christianity, and her whole soul was absorbed in it. It afforded her what she thought a

substantial ground for her two primary impulses, which were perfect self-sacrifice for the good of others, and an awful sense of the obligations of duty. In this period of her life she showed all the peculiarities which prophesied a new Protestant saint. She knew enough, as she thought, of the pleasures of the world to appreciate all their value, and to condemn them as valueless. She was overcome by the sense of sin, even while indulging in what the general theological sense of the world has come to consider comparatively sinless. She had, as a woman of genius, an instinctive sense of the splendor and beauty of the great authors she had read and assimilated, and yet she had a fear that her intense appreciation of exceptional but still unsanctified genius might be a grievous violation of her duty. Her letter to Miss Lewis, at the age of twenty, on the bad effects of novels, illustrates her renunciation of even the cherished companions of her youthful years. She had at the age of eight a passionate admiration of "Waverley." During this interval of evangelical piety she half surrendered her delight in the novels of Scott. She read books which taught that the indulgence of her taste for even innocent works of fiction might lead her down to perdition. Her sense of the folly of this extreme creed kept her on the sane path of reasonable evangelicism; but she persisted in it until she read the works of Isaac Taylor. This good Christian, in his many books, especially in his "Physical Theory of a Future Life," and in his elaborate discussion of facts connected

with "Ancient Christianity," unsettled in her mind that faith in the Christian religion it was designed to establish on an indestructible foundation. The book which completed the work of making her reject all orthodox creeds was Charles Hennell's "Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity." When afterwards she met in London Mackay, Lewes, Herbert Spencer, not to mention others, all her old theological opinions were cast aside by her understanding, while they still held a strange influence over her heart and soul. It is curious that her greatest efforts in characterization are those which embody men or women of religious genius. So far as we remember, there is not a single character in any of her novels who attracts our sympathies by his scepticism. The intense experience through which she passed as an unquestioning Christian animates all her novels. In her life she never swerved from religion, as she understood it. In all her published letters she expresses something like horror at vulgar irreligion. No novelist or dramatist has approached her in her singular power of embodying religious character; and the reason is that she had "experienced" religion vitally. All after-addition of scepticism added not any element to her power. To the last she made religion the central part of life; for in religion she found her deepest belief that self-sacrifice for others was the fundamental base of all ethics, and that to give humanity what a Yankee might call "a shove forwards" was the greatest thing that the best and noblest men



and women could hope, in this imperfect world, to do. One of the puzzles of her life is, that in matters regarding religion she allowed her understanding to adopt opinions which her deepest reason and affections repudiated. Her heart ever gave the lie to her head.

"The best good Christian she,  
Although she knew it not."

But the fact remains that in her published works the reader would search in vain for any indication of her private sceptical tendencies.

What some liberal critics would call the great mistake of her life, if not, as both English and American matronhood assert, the great blot on her character, was her marriage with George H. Lewes. According to English law the marriage was illegal. The wife of Mr. Lewes abandoned him after committing adultery; she felt or pretended to feel remorse for her conduct, and was received back into the household she had dishonored. Then some new seducer tempted her to fly away from her husband and children. Thus his home became homeless. By a technicality of English law, Lewes had forfeited his right to be divorced from his faithless partner, because in a moment of compassion he had received her back as his "lawfully" wedded wife. In this condition, as a twice-dishonored husband, he met Miss Evans. He was fascinated by her, and she gradually became fascinated by him. There was no outward beauty on either side; Lewes

was one of the homeliest men in Great Britain, and Miss Evans had no personal attractions, if we except the sweetness of her voice and the singular beauty of expression in her eyes. Each saw the visage of the other "in the mind." Miss Evans, repudiating the technicality of the English law, consented to be united to Mr. Lewes; went abroad with him, was married to him, we think, in some foreign city, and returned to England a kind of social rebel, frowned upon by all women except those intimate friends who knew her motives and never faltered in their friendship. As she never sought "society," and rather disliked it, she bore with exemplary patience all the social disadvantages of her illegal rather than immoral conduct. Seven years before her union we find in one of her letters this remark about the novel of "Jane Eyre," then the literary sensation of the season: "All self-sacrifice is good, but one would like it to be in a somewhat nobler cause than that of a diabolical law which chains a man soul and body to a putrefying carcass." After her marriage, she wrote to her friend Mrs. Bray, "that any unworldly, unsuperstitious woman who is sufficiently acquainted with the realities of life can pronounce my relations to Mr. Lewes immoral, I can only understand by remembering how subtle and complex are the influences which mould opinion."

Whatever may be thought of the legality or morality of the connection, there can be no doubt that it led to the happiest results to both parties. Lewes had been practically homeless for two years. There was

danger that his children would grow up uneducated and uncared for. He was fast drifting into Bohemian habits. Four years after his new marriage, Mrs. Lewes states in her journal that their "double life is more and more blessed—more and more complete." A few weeks after, Lewes writes in his journal that he owes an intellectual debt of gratitude to Herbert Spencer. He says: "My acquaintance with him was the brightest ray in a very dreary, wasted period of my life. . . . I owe him another and deeper debt. It was through him that I learned to know Marian; to know her was to love her,—and since then my life has been a new birth. To her I owe all my prosperity and happiness. God bless her!"

It is curious that on this first introduction he did not make a favorable impression. He was a brilliant converser on all topics that come up for discussion at a dinner-table; was one of the best story-tellers in London; was a man of various accomplishments, seeming to know everything without having thoroughly mastered anything, and with a self-confidence and self-sufficiency which offended many grave persons who were not captivated by his wit and pleasantry. The austere Lucy Aiken once met him at a dinner-party, and in a letter to Dr. Channing records her dislike of him, as a flippant, pretentious, and irreverent person. Miss Evans, on first seeing him, says that in appearance he was "a miniature Mirabeau." In March, 1853, he seems to have overcome her repugnance, for she says, "Lewes is always genial and amusing. He has

quite won my liking in spite of myself." A month after, he had advanced in her opinion, for she writes to Mrs. Bray: "Lewes especially is kind and attentive to me, and has quite won my regard after having had a good deal of my vituperation. Like a few other people in the world, he is much better than he seems, — a man of heart and conscience wearing a mask of flippancy."

During the next fifteen months he gained her love, — love, we think, born somewhat of compassion in considering his desolate home and neglected children, but which after their union ripened into an intensity of affection seldom equalled in the annals of matrimony. After completing any of her great books, the manuscript concludes with a dedication of the work to her "dear husband." The manuscript of "*Romola*" may be selected as an example. The inscription runs thus: "To the husband whose perfect love has been the best source of her insight and strength, this manuscript is given by his devoted wife, the writer."

"*Romola*" was the novel which, of all her works, most tasked the energies of her mind and most exhausted her bodily strength. "I began it," she said to Mr. Cross, "a young woman; I finished it an old woman." Yet the inscription of "*Middlemarch*" to Lewes, nine years after, shows that the "old woman" still glowed with undiminished affection for her "George," as she lovingly called him: "To my dear husband, George Henry Lewes, in this nineteenth year of our blessed union."

Indeed, the honeymoon in the case of this couple lasted as long as the life of the husband.

Lewes himself was also immensely benefited by his marriage. She was his salvation. All the works for which he will be remembered were written in the years when her ardent sympathy with his labors was at once his inspiration and his guide. His love and reverence for her were unbounded, and exhibited on all occasions, public as well as private. Mr. Estcott has, since the autobiography was published, given quite a vivid picture of him as he appeared at the Sunday receptions of his wife. "The function," he says, "was more like a religious ceremonial than a social reunion, and Mr. Lewes played to perfection the part of Hierophant. The gifted lady sat in the centre of a crowd of worshippers, of whom some were permitted to hold personal converse with her. But the majority gazed at her reverently and mutely from afar, as if they were looking upon the Beatific Vision. If any one spoke in too loud a tone, or spoke at all, when George Eliot happened to be speaking herself, he was at once met with a 'hush' of reprehension by Mr. Lewes, and was made to feel that he had perpetrated a sort of impiety."

He continues: "George Eliot had unquestionably immeasurable charm of mind, manner, and conversation for those who knew her well; but I must say that I never advanced beyond the outer circle of worshippers, and that I always felt myself one of the Levites at the gate."



We have heard a number of visitors at these receptions, both those who were in the inner and those who were in the outer circle, relate their experiences, and they all agree in ascribing to Mr. Lewes this devotional air and attitude to his wife; while those who happened to be in the inner circle on such occasions agree in ascribing to Mrs. Lewes the charm of unpretentious, unassuming modesty of behavior while conversing with such thinkers as Spencer and Mill.

But perhaps we owe to this marriage — illegal in a technical point of view, but violating no principle of absolute morality — the great works of fiction which have rendered the name of George Eliot illustrious, and which promise to live as long as the English literature of the nineteenth century interests people who speak the English language. When she first thought of writing a story, he doubted whether she had the power of dramatic presentation. Still, he urged her to try; and in less than two months she wrote the first of the "Scenes of Clerical Life," — that devoted to the "Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton." Lewes at once appreciated it, and sent it to John Blackwood for publication in "Blackwood's Magazine." He was just the person to look after his wife's interests in dealing with publishers. He saved her from all the annoyances connected with authorship; and finding that she was susceptible to that commonest kind of criticism which ignores the writer's aim and purpose, he at last selected for her reading all those portions of contemporary comments on her works

which would please her, and concealed from her all those which betrayed ignorance, envy, or malice and prejudice. It was not that she wished to be praised or flattered, — she was superior to that ignoble ambition; but her sensitive nature was hurt by reading a criticism which misconceived the whole spirit of the work on which she had conscientiously expended months of labor, and every page of which represented an expenditure of vitality which her weak physical frame could ill spare. Criticism which indicated an intuitive glance into the processes of her mind, and proved that the critic had for the time assumed her point of view before objecting to her treatment of a subject, was always welcome to her; but purely external criticism, which condemned without in the least understanding her, had the effect of throwing her into long moods of depression, during which she felt as if the very sources of her creative activity were smitten as by paralysis. Lewes did her great service by not allowing her to be disturbed by reviews which could do her no good, but which might do her much evil.

And then at the time of their union they were poor, and were called upon not only to support and educate his children, but to support the wretched mother of his children, — the last task one of almost superhuman benevolence. They had to look sharply at every sixpence that was spent, and often to deprive themselves of the simplest pleasures. Now, Lewes knew, to a farthing, the exact money-value of every drop of ink which flowed from his wife's pen. It is

refreshing to observe that from the moment the success of the "Scenes of Clerical Life" indicated the province of literature that the genius of George Eliot, as distinguished from her talent, was to enrich with new and original works, money poured into the family with almost bewildering rapidity. For "Adam Bede" Blackwood gave her £800 for four years' copyright; its success was so great that he sent her voluntarily an additional £400 before the first year of its publication had elapsed; and then came another £800 for the second year after the agreement. It was evident that Blackwood felt that he had obtained a great prize in the new author, and that he wished to retain the prize by his liberality. For "The Mill on the Floss" he gave £2,000 for the first edition of 4,000 copies. When "Romola" was in preparation, Smith, Elder, & Co. offered £10,000 for the copyright at home and abroad; and they finally paid £7,000 for its serial publication in the "Cornhill Magazine." For "Middlemarch" and "Daniel Deronda" the author must have received much larger sums. The Harpers, of New York, paid £1,200 merely for the advance sheets of "Middlemarch." In November, 1859, she writes to a friend that the offers made to her by rival publishers are so great, that if she could be seduced by them she might have written three poor novels, and made her fortune in a year. "Happily," she adds, "I have no need to exert myself when I say, 'Avaunt thee, Satan!' Satan, in the form of bad writing and good pay, is not seductive to me."

It is with regret that want of space prevents us from entering upon an elaborate consideration of many topics that these volumes suggest. We have said that they do not shed so much new light on the interior facts and processes of her mind as the reader could wish. There is one passage, however, in a letter to John Blackwood, while she was engaged in writing "The Mill on the Floss," which is suggestive of her method. "My stories," she says, "grow in me like plants, and this is only in the leaf-bud. I have faith that the flower will come,—not enough faith, though, to make me like the idea of beginning to print till the flower is fairly out; till I know the end as well as the beginning." This indicates her marvellous power of representing character as it grows. Dickens once said that in reading the novels of many of his contemporaries it appeared to him as if the authors lived next door to their characters. "Now," he added, "I always live *inside* of mine." George Eliot might, with even greater truth, have said this of her own creations. She placed herself, by imagination and sympathy, at the inmost core of the natures of her characters, and delineated them from within, not approached them from without. She did not merely look *at* them, but she looked *into* them, and also looked through them to the spiritual laws they obeyed or violated. She kept a sort of relentless watch on all the subtle, interior movements of their minds and hearts; and they could not pass into a dreaming sleep without being still subject to this

piercing glance into the fantasies and wild incidents of their dreams.

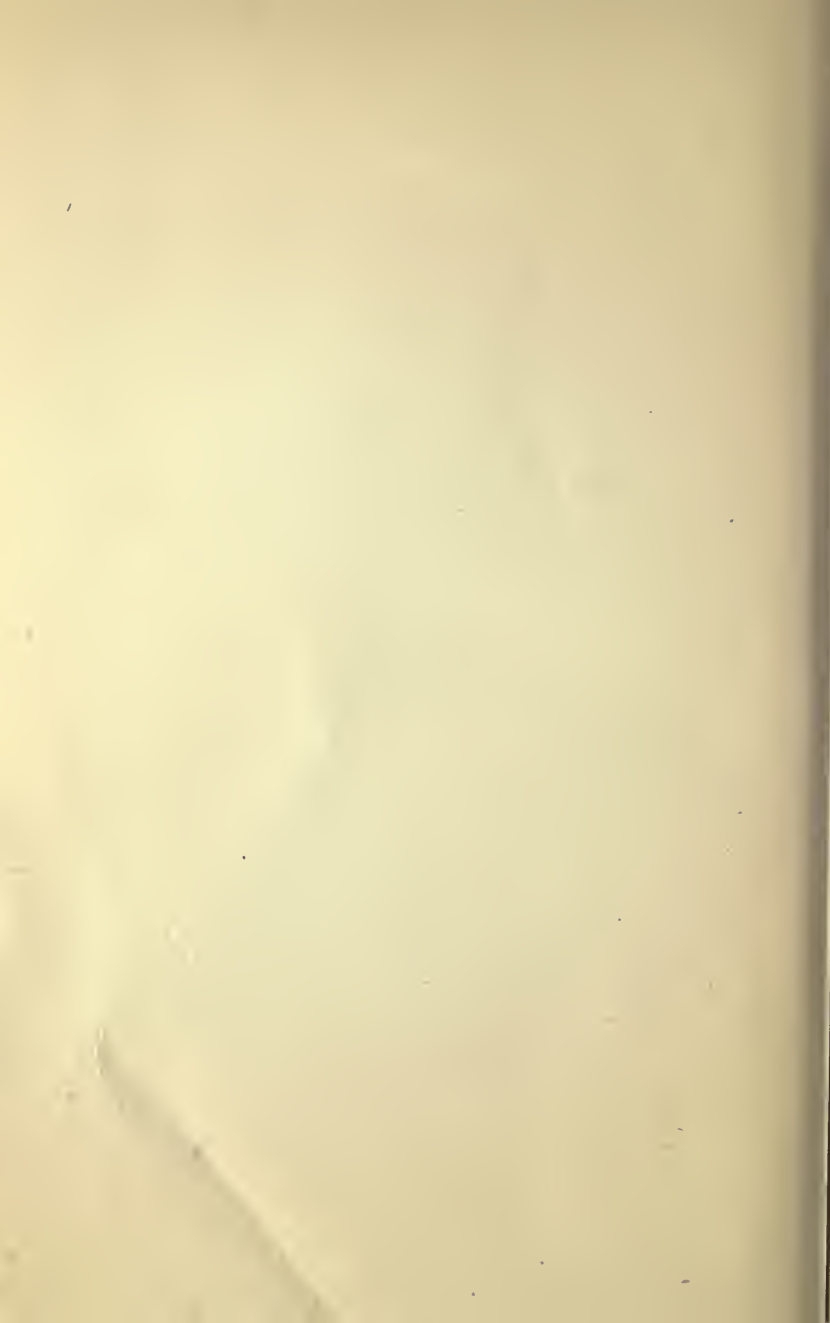
It has always seemed to us that the genius and character of George Eliot widened and deepened as the years passed on, and that "Romola," "Middlemarch," and "Daniel Deronda" are the greatest of her works. They certainly show that she did not repeat the characters she had once depicted, but enlarged her field of characterization with each successive novel. However this opinion may be questioned, there can be no doubt that Lewes, after his union with her, became a much better man and a much abler writer than before. He produced, by patient thought and study, several scientific works of decided merit. The union between the two continued "blessed" up to the day of his unexpected death, which occurred in November, 1878. The shock to her of this event was terrible. She at last recovered sufficiently to see her intimate friends, and to arrange her husband's manuscripts for publication. In every duty she was called upon to perform she was cordially assisted by Mr. J. W. Cross, with whom and with whose family she had enjoyed an uninterrupted friendship for more than thirteen years. He had such a love and reverence for her that it is hardly a matter of wonder that the friendship ended in marriage, about eighteen months after the death of Mr. Lewes. She lived only a little more than seven months afterwards, dying on the 22d of December, 1880. The paragraph with which Mr. Cross concludes the Auto-

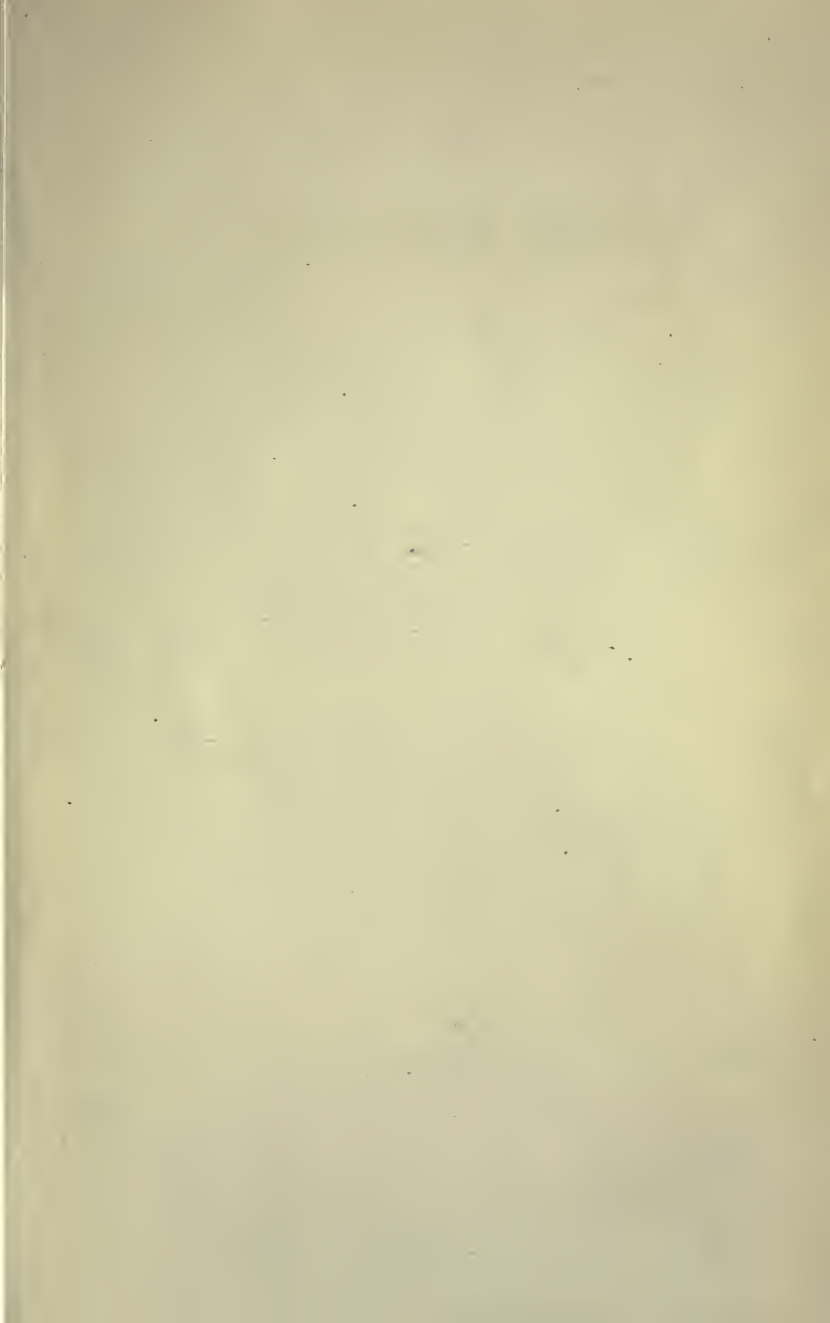


biography may well serve as the conclusion of this brief article: "The place that may belong to her in the minds and in the hearts of future generations will be finally adjudged on the merits of her works. We who write and we who read to-day will never know that final verdict, but I think that those of us who loved her may trust to it with confidence."













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